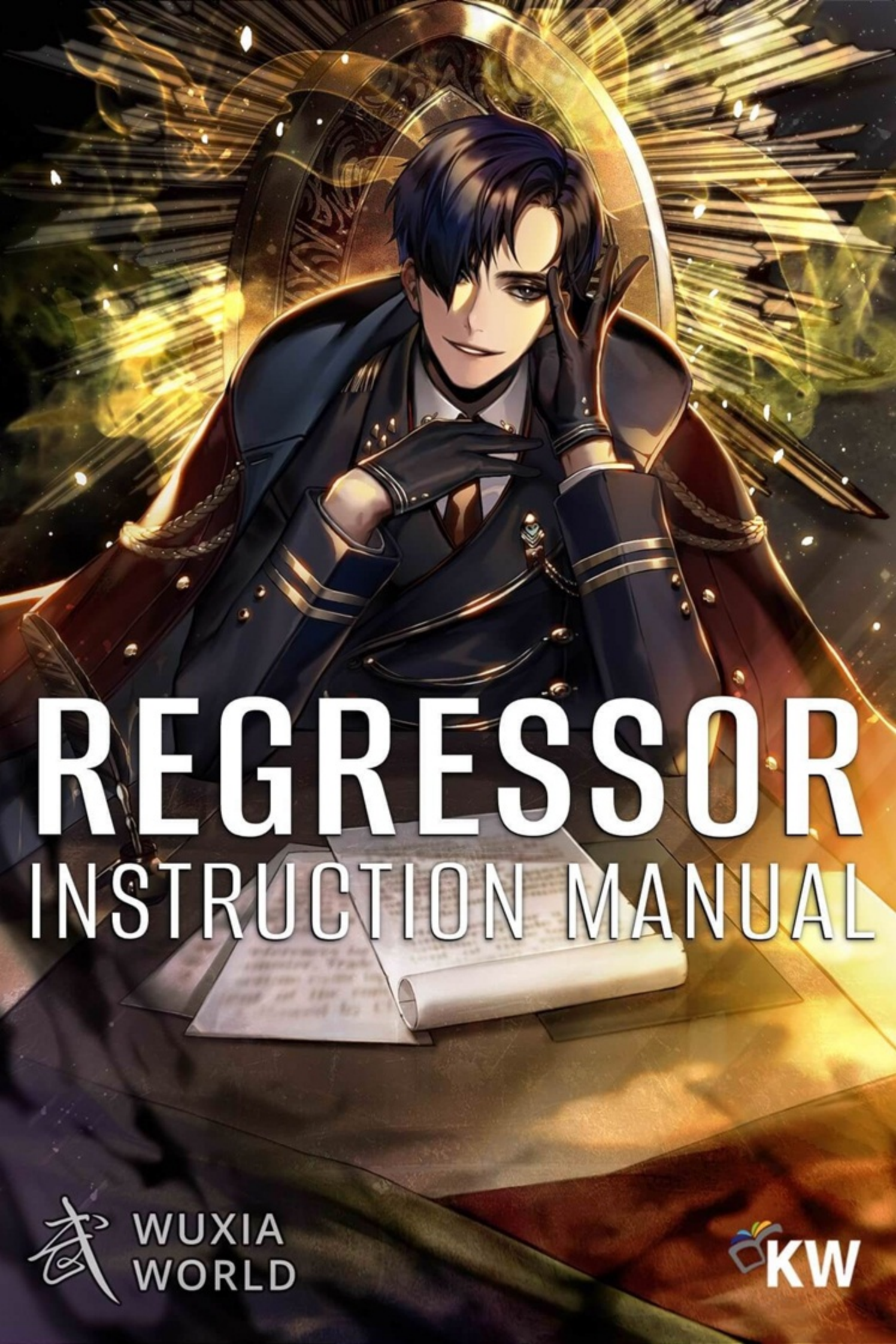

REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
KW

REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 351
KIM HYUN-AH (1)

'I can't tell whether that pig is helpful or not.'

Park Deok-Gu had been helpful at crucial times, but he often caused a commotion at unexpected moments. Kim Hyun-Sung was about to tell me that he was a regressor, and I was sure he had been thinking hard about it. In addition, I was certain that the strange atmosphere was causing him to open the treasure chest of his heart on impulse, but when the disruptor appeared, Kim Hyun-Sung managed to think reasonably again. However, I couldn't say that it completely ruined the moment.

'It's still possible.'

I immediately looked at him and spoke, "What were you trying to say?"

"…"

"…"

"No, it's nothing," Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

'Shit.'

"I'll tell you later. The others are waiting, and we have a lot of issues to resolve in the meantime," he added.

'I knew it. Damn it, I knew this was going to happen.'

I wanted to ask once more, but I couldn't be obvious and ask him about it again. It was unfortunate, but…

'Is it okay to be satisfied with this?'

In the first place, the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung even thought about revealing the truth to me was a big achievement, and just knowing that he tried to reveal a secret he

couldn't tell anyone showed how much he trusted me. Since this was his first attempt, his second and third attempts should be even easier for him. As such, I had no choice but to let the topic go.

"Okay, next time then…" I said.

"…"

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded lightly, and when he opened the door, I saw the guild members looking at us. Of course, the one who stuck out the most was Park Deok-Gu, and even though he looked happy, I wanted to flick his forehead. Jung Ha-Yan quickly ran to my side, and Sun Hee-Young and Jo Hye-Jin looked happy, so they had to have heard good news while Kim Hyun-Sung and I were talking in the other room.

"What's going on, Mr. Deok-Gu?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"It'll be faster if you hear it from Mr. Elias. *Ahem*. It's good news," Park Deok-Gu replied.

Despite his answer, Kim Hyun-Sung still looked worried. Fortunately, Elias started talking to us.

"There are a few things I need to tell you. First, I would like to apologize again for my rudeness earlier."

'How many times is he going to apologize?'

Elias definitely felt really bad. Elves were famous as a gentle race, so I could understand why he was being like this, but at this point, it was kind of annoying. Anyway, Elias started talking seriously, and everyone focused on him. After all, his answer would determine the party's next course of action.

"I received a royal letter from Father just now."

"…"

"Basically…" he trailed off.

"…"

“My father decided to accept the Blue Guild’s offer,” he continued.

‘Wow… ’

“The letter said that Everia will provide support to the Blue Guild in any way possible, but… you have to agree to a few conditions,” he added.

‘I knew it.’

“That’s fine. Please tell us the conditions,” I replied.

“Alright. A few elves and I will join your party. Asking you to move about on your own is—I’m sorry,” he apologized once again.

“It’s fine. We’re actually grateful,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

“Thank you for your understanding,” Elias said.

“I can understand why you’re nervous,” I commented.

“The next condition is… we have to make sure that this incident wouldn’t get leaked. It’s just a document, but I’d appreciate it if you could read it over at least once. The committee will feel more relieved even if it’s just a simple formality. I hope you understand,” he requested.

“Sure, no problem,” I replied.

“And lastly…” he stopped.

“…”

“Please tell us the information you heard from the shaman in the Sacred Democratic Country and the sight she saw. I understand that it can be uncomfortable, but I hope you’ll tell us more about it,” he asked.

‘Our Hyun-Sung isn’t good at lying, though… ’

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung and saw him deep in his thoughts. I lied when I said that Kim Hyun-Sung discovered the Everia Kingdom’s issue thanks to the future he had heard from Kasugano Yuno. There was also a high chance that he had never talked to

Kasugano Yuno. However, just as I thought about stepping in, Kim Hyun-Sung spoke in a low voice.

“It’s the collapse of Everia.”

“What?” Elias asked.

My instincts told me that Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t lying.

‘Did it happen in his past life?’

It would be reasonable to think that way, and Elias was also convinced by Kim Hyun-Sung’s sincere expression because he immediately asked, “Is that true?”

“I’m only telling you what I heard. I have no idea when it will happen *exactly*, but it’ll be a critical point for Everia. An unimaginably large war will break out, and humans, as well as all the other races, will form an alliance and use Everia as the final base for the war. However, I heard that we will fail in the ultimate fight,” Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

Kim Hyun-Sung’s words sounded like he was the leader of a cult preaching about the end of the world. However, his grim look made his words convincing.

“Could you explain in detail?” Elias requested.

“I haven’t heard about the cause or anything else. That’s all I heard,” he replied.

“Then, the World Tree…” Elias mentioned.

“It won’t rot because we’re here. The future can change, Mr. Elias. The future she saw isn’t set in stone. A small action can definitely change the future. Just like now,” he answered.

‘Has he matured?’

Kim Hyun-Sung had changed. Back then, he was heavily reliant on the information he knew from his past life, but right now, he actually seemed sure that the future could be changed.

I nodded with satisfaction because his growth would be helpful to me as well. He had

grown as a person, but the information he revealed was interesting.

'Ultimate fight? Alliance?'

It wasn't the ongoing war between the Republic and the Sacred Democratic Country. It could be about the masked scum, Jin Cheong, but it could also be about an enemy who hadn't appeared just yet.

'If that's the case… perhaps the World Tree was purified before the war broke out?'

It was just an assumption, but it was hard to believe that the Everia Kingdom could become the final sanctuary of the war without the World Tree's barrier. Of course, I wasn't saying that the security here was weak, but Everia wasn't like Castle Rock or the Sacred Democratic Country with their massive walls. If we had chosen this place as the final sanctuary in Kim Hyun-Sung's past life, despite the World Tree's complete collapse, then the leaders of his past life were a bunch of incompetent idiots.

'The same thing goes for Kim Hyun-Sung and his knowledge about how to purify the World Tree… '

Based on the situation, it was hard to tell whether he had actually gotten involved, but it was safe to assume that the World Tree was purified before the ultimate fight Kim Hyun-Sung had mentioned. At the very least, I was sure he had heard of it. Basically, a war broke out after the World Tree was purified, and mankind lost the war. I had no idea if another war broke out afterward, but we were probably fast approaching the point when Kim Hyun-Sung regressed.

It was an exciting thing to think about, but I didn't have time to continue thinking about it because the atmosphere became serious.

'Shit… '

"I see… I understand what you're saying. I think it would be best if we took our time discussing this matter," Elias suggested.

"No. It'll be better if we discuss it while moving," Kim Hyun-sung said.

"What? You mean…"

“We’ll move out now. I’d appreciate it if you could prepare an expedition party with the elves,” he replied.

“That’s not a problem, but… You must be tired from the long journey… How about—”

“We don’t have time to waste. I’ll fill in the blanks of my explanation while we’re moving,” he interrupted.

‘It’s okay to take a break.’

“I’ll make sure to give everyone plenty of time to rest later. I want all the guild members to get ready to leave,” Kim Hyun-Sung instructed.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung, everyone is really worn out…” I started.

“No, I’m fine.”

“We’re fine as well. We have enough stamina.”

“Both Ki-Mo bro and I have enough stamina as well. Ah-Young and the others are also probably fine, but you probably need time to rest. How about you take a nap, hyung-nim? If it becomes uncomfortable, I can carry you on my back, or we can cast a sleeping spell on you and carry you there. I’m sure everything will be resolved once you wake up. Wait! Do you even have to go?” Park Deok-Gu questioned.

I had never considered that question, so I turned my head and saw Kim Hyun-Sung nod.

“Yes, he does. It’s going to be difficult, but it’ll be better if Mr. Ki-Young goes with us. I’ll give everyone thirty minutes to prepare,” Kim Hyun-Sung replied.

“Well, good thing I didn’t unpack. I never imagined we’d be moving out this fast. It’s all thanks to you, Hyun-Sung bro,” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“I’m ready.”

“Me, too.”

“I’m ready as well.”

Park Deok-Gu was right. There wasn't really anything to prepare because we didn't really get to unpack our luggage. I had always thought about how Kim Hyun-Sung was moving more urgently recently, but I had never imagined the situation would progress this quickly. I needed time to think, so I spoke cautiously, but even my resistance was futile.

"What about the supplies?"

"You don't have to worry about that. My father said Everia will provide full support, so I'm sure my brother is making preparations," Elena replied.

"Are you going as well, Miss Elena?" I asked.

"Yes. I'm weak, but I'd like to lend my power. It'll be a big problem if something happens to you on the way there. I'm the only one who can treat you as well… so I have to go," she answered.

"Thank you for your hard work," I said.

"No, it should be us who should apologize and express our gratitude. But about our destination—" she mentioned.

"We should start investigating the Fairy Forest," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"The Fairy Forest?" Elena questioned.

"Yes."

"Then, we need to be fully prepared," she commented.

Elena's expression turned strange after hearing Kim Hyun-Sung's reply.

"Is that place dangerous?" I asked.

"It's not a dangerous place, but…" Elena trailed off.

"Yes?"

"The fairies enjoy playing tricks," she continued.

“What?”

“Now that I think about it, you probably don’t know much about fairies. Well… they have been forgotten by the people on the continent… Of course, you don’t have to worry too much about it. The power of the fairies is special, but their power won’t harm the body. If I have to give an example, all they do is change one’s outer appearance or one’s gender. There are some who play mischievous tricks, but they’re good children,” she explained.

It was kind of interesting.

CHAPTER 352
KIM HYUN-AH (2)

"It's only natural that you haven't seen them yet because the environment they live in is extremely important for their survival," Elena said.

"Environment?" I asked.

"Yes. When our ancestors were still alive, I heard that fairies could be found all over the continent, but now, you can only find them in the Everia Kingdom. Basically, fairies can only live in untainted forests," she continued.

"They sound similar to creatures that are on the verge of extinction. So they can only live in grade one areas?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Yes, you're right, Mr. Park Deok-Gu. Because of the humans' thoughtless development, they lost their homes, and—*Ah*, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to tell you that…" she apologized.

"It's fine since you're not wrong," I told her.

"As expected!" she exclaimed.

"But you can't always think like that, Miss Elena. Unlike the elves being protected by the World Tree, the humans had never been spoonfed. If you think about how the materials to build wooden fences and castle walls all come from the forest, sacrifices have to be made for the survival and development of mankind. You'll find it interesting if you try to imagine a world where elves didn't have the World Tree," I explained.

"*Ah*."

"I'm sure the elves would have had to build wooden fences and castle walls. Since no tree gives an infinite amount of fruit, you would need land to farm and feed the large population. You would also have to create a waterway for the sake of drinkable water, and your life would have definitely been completely different from what it is

today," I continued.

"I-I guess you can think of it that way," Elena stuttered.

"Of course, at the current stage, it's hard to differentiate whether it's simply for our survival or it's to fulfill our greed, but if something like the World Tree was given to mankind, I believe that things would be a bit different than today. I also find this to be unfortunate, but if the environment changes, many things will change as well," I added.

"I see…" she muttered.

"Looks like I have been talking nonsense," I said.

"Not at all, Father Lee Ki-young. You've explained it from a different point of view, so it helped me widen my narrow mind," she said.

"Anyway, we should be…" I mentioned.

"Yes, we should be entering the Fairy Forest right about now," Elena answered.

"Are we here already?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"Because we've been moving without taking any breaks. The carriage won't go any further, so we should get out and travel on foot. Miss Jung Ha-Yan and Miss Sun Hee-Young, please prepare," Elena informed them.

"Okay."

"…"

I saw Jung Ha-Yan and Sun Hee-Young nod.

'They don't look so good.'

Surprisingly, Jung Ha-Yan looked to be in a better mood than Sun Hee-Young. Seeing that she hadn't blown up while I was talking to Elena made me think that the proposal had a huge effect on her. It could also be because she thought that my health was in Elena's hands. Unlike her, Sun Hee-Young looked kind of serious, and I had an idea why.

'Does she think I was taken from her?'

Before this lie became an act, Sun Hee-Young was previously in charge of taking care of me. There were a lot of times when we had to be apart, but now that her job had essentially been taken away from her, I could understand why she was in a bad mood. Taking care of me was basically the connection she had with me, so it was understandable for her to feel that way. Of course, I wasn't sure if she still had the same feelings for me as before, but I was slowly pushing her away because she seemed like she was showing interest in me. However, I couldn't help but think that my plan wasn't that successful when I saw her serious expression. Her ways simply weren't as extreme as Jung Ha-Yan's. Since I had already noticed Sun Hee-Young's strange changes, I had to watch how I behaved. I had to take care of her mental health bit by bit. I smiled at her, and my smile definitely made her feel better because she brightly smiled in response. I had this thought for quite a while now, but her appearance was close to my ideal type. Of course, it was just her appearance.

I exited the carriage while having silly thoughts and saw the other party members exiting their own carriage as well. To be honest, this sight was brand new to me. Usually, we would all ride in a huge carriage, but since the road wasn't wide enough for a large carriage, we had to split the party.

The surroundings caught my attention.

"*Wow*…"

Jung Ha-Yan exclaimed.

"It's really beautiful. This place is…"

Sun Hee-Young was at a loss for words. My jaw dropped as well. I reacted the same way when I first arrived in Everia, but the sight of a sea of flowers in colors that couldn't be seen on Earth was a sight to behold.

"Are there no monsters here?" I asked.

"This is one of the regions under the protection of the World Tree, so there are no monsters here. Wild animals do come here, but those children don't really visit this place… As I mentioned before, the fairies like to play tricks, and those who aren't immune to their tricks will be surprised and end up running away," Elena replied.

“So it’s better to travel quietly at all costs,” I commented.

“That's right.”

While I was talking to Elena, the guild members were unpacking the luggage in the carriage and wrapping up their preparations. Kim Hyun-Sung gave his signal, and the guild members immediately got into formation. The elves did the same as well. I knew the elves were trained well, but it was still a surreal sight to see them moving personally. I was sure they spoke to Kim Hyun-Sung in the carriage because the two formations complemented each other pretty well. It wasn’t a perfect harmony, but the formation was still harmonious. In other words, it was satisfactory. The part I was most satisfied with was how they considered my safety more important than the healers’ safety. The party seemed the same as always, but it felt good to know that others were attentive to me.

Anyway, the party started marching slowly. Kim Hyun-Sung was at the front, and even though I didn’t know if he had been here before, he was leading the party. He was walking in an extremely cautious way, but it wasn’t because it was dangerous. He seemed like he wanted to avoid an annoying situation. Honestly, walking like this was boring and tiring, and I couldn’t help but despise my cursed stamina. When I frowned after drinking a stamina potion, I saw Elena looking at me.

“Are you alright, Father Lee Ki-Young?”

“Yes, of course,” I replied.

“Please let me know if you’re getting tired. Like how a weak soul can damage the body, the same thing will happen the other way as well. Actually, I should tell the leader about this,” she suggested.

“No, it’s fine, Miss Elena. I’m not that tired,” I told her.

“You don’t have to reject it. It’s getting dark, and everyone looks tired anyway… I should bring it up to them,” she repeated.

“I’m really fine. Really,” I repeated.

However, it had already been decided that we would rest. When Jung Ha-Yan expressed that she was exhausted, it only took a moment for Kim Hyun-Sung to receive the news. The elves also stopped walking, and they started unpacking their

belongings to find a decent place to camp.

It was getting dark, and that was when I saw something shining.

"*Huh?*"

"Oppa, just now…"

"I saw it as well, Ha-Yan," I said.

It seemed like a firefly, but the only difference was that I could hear it chirping quietly. It was a language foreigners wouldn't be able to understand even if a translation spell were cast. The suspicion only lasted for a moment because when I recalled the conversation we had all day today, I instantly recognized it.

'Fairies.'

They looked similar to what I had imagined. They were a little bigger than the palm of my hand, and light kept on gushing out of their dragonfly-like wings. They looked more like elves than humans, and they looked extremely cute as well. It was strange that many of them gathered near Jung Ha-Yan, but after considering the fact that they often gathered in places with deep, pure mana, the sight wasn't really strange at all. It was only natural that they gathered around Jung Ha-Yan since her mana was extremely pure.

"Thankfully, there aren't many of them," Elena commented.

"This isn't many?" I asked.

"Yes. I think it's all thanks to how we're moving quietly, and it's dark as well," she replied.

There was *a lot* by my standards, but that wasn't the case for elves.

'They're pretty.'

It seemed that the elves had long gotten used to the fairies because they continued to set up camp and weren't really bothered. In contrast, the members of the Blue Guild kept looking around. We had seen a lot of interesting things, but this was a brand-new sight, so I was sure it grabbed their attention. Kim Ye-Ri had always been

pretending that she didn't like cute things, but she completely fell in love with the fairies. Of course, some members were struggling because of the fairies' tricks.

The fairies snatched Lee Chang-Ryeol's red mask, and Park Deok-Gu was turned into a Christmas tree. Strangely enough, some of the fairies were throwing small rocks at Han Sora. She didn't seem to be in pain, but it was definitely a shocking scene for her. Since she was a girl, she wasn't happy about being hated by cute things. She and I knew the reason why the fairies were doing that to her, but she pretended as if she were unbothered.

The others showed their interest as well. Hwang Jung-Yeon turned into scholar mode as she looked at the fairies pulling her hair and glasses with wide eyes, but Yoo Ah-Young's situation was even worse than hers. Many fairies started pulling her clothes, and to make things worse, there was a fairy trying to fly between her large breasts, so it was a pretty embarrassing sight.

"*Kyah!*"

"Stop. S-Stop it now…" Elena stuttered.

It was the same for Elena. A few fairies were jumping on her ears as if it were a trampoline, and the fairies looked extremely happy as they jumped around.

'They're really annoying.'

A few fairies started charging toward me. They weren't causing me any harm, but they were annoying to deal with.

"Is there a way to prevent them from approaching?" I asked.

"*Ah*, there is a way to make them go away, but that will cause them to bring more friends. It's almost time for them to sleep anyway, so once dinner time is over, it'll become quieter. Before that…" she trailed off.

It was because Kim Hyun-Sung was slowly approaching us. Many fairies were on him as well, but there had to be something he wanted to tell us. However, I suddenly noticed something strange, and I wasn't imagining it. Kim Hyun-Sung's body was changing bit by bit, and he definitely noticed it as well because he looked down.

"*Huh?*"

His voice sounded higher.

“This is annoying,” Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

His hair came down to his shoulders, and I realized that he became the first victim of their tricks.

“Mr. Ki-Young, are you okay?” he asked.

‘I should be asking you that.’

The person looking at me was a woman in her late teens.

“Oppa… became a little sister.”

Kim Ye-Ri’s mutter sounded loud and clear.

CHAPTER 353
KIM HYUN-AH (3)

"Oppa… became a little sister," Kim Ye-Ri mumbled.

What she said completely described Kim Hyun-Sung's current appearance. I looked around without saying anything, and I saw the others staring at him. Obviously, they started laughing soon afterward. Elena warned us earlier, but it was an extremely surreal scene. Kim Hyun-Sung now looked like he was 17 years old at most, and it seemed like other parts of his body had changed as well. His height, arms, and legs had shortened, and the straight hair that came down his shoulders stuck out the most. It was the very definition of *glossy* hair. It seemed like someone had coated his hair with oil, but surprisingly, it was still swaying in the wind. His face looked like Kim Hyun-Sung's face was transplanted onto a woman. I had always thought that he was handsome, but he became as beautiful as an elf with this gender change. I had no idea if he had realized it just yet, but he became so beautiful that he could be considered to have become a woman of great beauty. This wasn't a subjective opinion.

The party members were glancing at him, and even the elves looked at him as if they found him interesting. The most interesting part was Kim Hyun-Sung's behavior. He looked unnatural because he acted like a middle-aged man even though he looked like a woman in her late teens. For example, he stroked his chin and frowned. However, even though his actions didn't match his current appearance, he still looked really cute. Of course, his current looks didn't make my heart race because even though he looked young, I knew better than anyone that—at the core—she was Kim Hyun-Sung. However, I really wanted to pat her head at least once.

The situation rendered me speechless. I looked at Elena, and she started talking cautiously.

"I'm sure it's temporary, so you don't have to worry so much."

"Is that so?" I asked.

"Yes. The spell will disperse outside the Fairy Forest, so once you leave the Fairy

Forest or as time passes, you'll return to your original form. Surprisingly, ordinary dispel magic doesn't work on it…" she replied.

"Why is that?" I asked.

"I assume it's because the mechanism of the magic works differently. The boundary of whether the magic used by fairies can even be considered magic or not is still not clear. I don't know much, but I can guarantee one thing: it won't be a huge problem," she assured.

"That's a relief," I commented.

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded at Elena's words. Kim Ye-Ri and Jo Hye-Jin sighed openly, and they had to have been worried. Since Kim Hyun-Sung reacted the same way…

'He has never been here before.'

He was pretending like it wasn't a big deal, but he probably got surprised as well. After confirming the information he had heard, I saw a small smile on Kim Hyun-Sung's face, I wasn't sure if it was true, but it seemed like this was his first time experiencing the fairies' tricks. As such, it should be his first time entering that dungeon we talked about. I could remember him saying that it was an above legendary dungeon, so this expedition could never be a walk in a park.

'It would have been better if he had been to the dungeon before… '

Unfortunately, the incessant approach of the fairies ruined the atmosphere. The way they flew around didn't fit the serious atmosphere, and even though it was only for a bit, everyone looked kind of relaxed. Kim Hyun-Sung looked like he was about to say something, but he kept quiet as if he had made a decision. He definitely thought that it was okay to have a day like this.

'Resting is important, too.'

The others definitely noticed Kim Hyun-Sung's acceptance, and Ahn Ki-Mo broke the silence.

"So it's true! This is really interesting. The guild master, *ah*, Miss Ye-Ri as well… they have been affected by the fairies' magic."

“What?” Kim Ye-Ri asked.

“Your gender,” he replied.

“Mister Ki-Mo… I’m still the same,” she said.

It was only for a moment, but her face turned scary. Ahn Ki-Mo had to have realized that he made a mistake because I saw him frantically trying to change the subject.

“T-There must be something wrong with my eyesight!”

“…”

“N-No one else changed other than Mr. Hyun-Sung. Is there a reason?” he asked.

“Isn’t it because of the fairies’ whim? I thought I had already seen enough interesting things after arriving here, but it looks like I still have a long way to go. The way Hyun-Sung bro transformed like that… Even though it’s only temporary, shouldn’t we change his name? I think Kim Hyun-Ah is suitable,” Park Deok-Gu suggested.

“That’s rude,” Jo Hye-Jin commented.

“Your problem is that you’re too serious, Hye-Jin noonim,” he told her.

“The name is good enough for the guild master,” she said.

“*Ahem*. That’s why it’s a joke. I just wanted to say something ridiculous. It looks like it’ll be a special experience, but for some reason, I don’t want to be a part of it,” added Park Deok-Gu.

“I’m sure that’s the same for everyone,” Kim Ye-Ri chimed in.

“I kind of want to see it…”

I wasn’t sure why Hwang Jung-Yeon made that strange comment, but I had to agree with Kim Ye-Ri’s remark. That was when I realized the fairies had good eyes, and during all of this, the fairies continued to attack Han Sora, which made me feel kind of bad for her.

The other female guild members were preparing the meals, and unlike my

assumption that we would have a simple meal, it was a pretty legit meal. I thought Kim Hyun-Ah had given a direct order, and it was probably about how we would enter the dungeon tomorrow. Now that I thought about it…

'Wasn't she going to say something earlier?'

I turned my head and saw Kim Hyun-Ah approaching me. She had always been slightly taller than me, so it felt strange to look down at her. The way she patted my back also seemed unnatural for some reason.

"By the way, I haven't heard your answer… Are you feeling better?" she asked.

"Yes, I'm feeling fine… Miss Elena mentioned that it's best if we take a break, but I didn't want to cause any harm," I replied.

"It's fine. We're almost there anyway. Resting properly for a day is a good idea. Everyone followed without any complaints, but I'm sure the rearguards are tired. Miss Ha-Yan, Miss Hee-Young, Miss Sora, and Miss Jung-Yeon, I'm sure they're exhausted," she explained.

"They had no choice but to keep on exhausting their mana. By the way, are you doing fine, Miss Hyun-Ah?" I asked.

"Yes, of course. Physically, I… *Ah*, are you asking about my current condition?" she asked.

"Yes."

"The clothes I'm wearing are uncomfortable, but it's not a big problem and aside from my short height. I won't have any issues when I fight. My appearance changed, but my physical stats are still the same. If I were in Mr. Deok-Gu's or Miss Ah-Young's position, I would have felt pretty uncomfortable, but there are some advantages to a smaller body as well. Of course, I'll find out soon enough which body size is more efficient," she replied.

'That's not what I was asking… '

"I'm not sure if it's just me, but I feel lighter and more nimble. *Ah*, thank you, Miss Hye-Jin," she added.

I was sure that they had been in a rush to prepare the meals because Jo Hye-Jin quickly returned and handed Kim Hyun-Ah a bowl of stew. Of course, I got one as well.

Kim Hyun-Ah took a sip and continued talking. "Anyway, I'm relieved that there's some improvement. You're not having a seizure as often, so I'm truly relieved."

Her bright smile was an absurd side to behold, and she even continued talking with stew all over her mouth. It seemed that she still hadn't gotten used to her temporary body.

"Isn't it really pretty?" Kim Hyun-Ah asked.

"What?" I asked.

"This place," she replied.

"*Ah*, I agree. I'm sure you won't be able to see a place like this on Earth. *Haha*," I laughed.

"Of course not. A place like this probably doesn't exist on Earth," she said.

"…"

"…"

"Mr. Ki-Young," she called out.

"Yes?" I answered.

"This may be random, but I've resented coming to this place many times," she started.

"Probably…"

"Yes, I'm sure that's the case for most people. Anyone would hate getting dragged to a place without knowing what's going on. I've cried and screamed while questioning what the hell a quest was, why I was here, and it was all because I couldn't understand anything," she confessed.

“That’s surprising. You didn’t seem that way at all…” I commented.

“It’s because I thought that keeping my calmness up as best as I could in front of others was the best thing to do. However… people are pretty cunning. I must’ve taken a liking to this place. I sometimes miss the castle walls and Lindel, even though I despised seeing them. I don’t want places like this to disappear. It’s also the same for you and the others,” she continued.

“…”

“I never imagined we’d become this close, and I didn’t think I’d rely on you this much,” she added.

‘It’s the same for me, man.’

“It’s funny, but recently, I’ve been thinking that it’s a relief,” she said.

“A relief?” I asked.

“Yes. Meeting all of you has created all these connections. This is random, but even after a long time, I’d like to see this sight again with everyone. So… just hang in there a little bit longer,” she added.

Kim Hyun-Ah stood up and extended her hand out. Naturally, I grabbed her hand, and she helped me stand up.

“I’ve said something embarrassing, but I’m telling the truth,” Kim Hyun-Ah told me.

“No, I’m glad you told me that. I have the same thought,” I said.

At that moment, the sunset stood out, and it was as if the sunset was helping her set the mood. Her bright smile was a memorable sight to behold.

All of a sudden, I discovered a scary-looking Jung Ha-Yan standing a bit far from where we were. It had been a while since I saw her twisted lips, so I was startled. She pretended like nothing was wrong with her, but her expression looked twisted.

‘I hope she’s not going to cause trouble again.’

I let go of Kim Hyun-Ah’s hand. However, she was unbothered by it because she still

had that bright smile.

'Stop smiling, man.'

If I hadn't let go, a true monster would have come charging at her.

My anxiety caused me to wave at Jung Ha-Yan, and she ran toward me with a bright smile.

"*Haha*. Looks like I've used up a lot of your time. I'll go and take a look around the area with the other elves. If we rest up today, we'll be able to enter the dungeon tomorrow. As I've mentioned before, I trust that you'll endure it, Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Ah said.

"I will…"

I felt ashamed when he tiptoed with a satisfied look and patted my shoulder twice. His eyes were filled with a strong sense of trust. Now that we were about to enter the dungeon, I started to feel even more bothered about the idea of wrapping up this matter.

'It'll be troublesome if Kim Hyun-Sung misunderstands… '

I would be in big trouble if he mistook me for the masked scum instead of Jin Cheong because there was nothing more painful than getting backstabbed by someone you *really* trust. Of course, I was innocent, but I had to think about what I should do if the treatment didn't work or if the situation took a turn for the worse.

'That Big Ear is the problem.'

It would be a relief if Kim Hyun-Sung's solution worked. I was kind of uncomfortable at the idea, but it should be a good thing to get my soul cleansed. However, if nothing changed, it would be a huge problem. A few lies and even the smallest variable could truly worsen the situation.

I had been continuously searching for a solution, but the problem was that I couldn't find one. At first, I was leaning toward hindering the expedition to the dungeon, but the moment Kim Hyun-Sung mentioned the ultimate fight, I had to scratch that plan off. We had to clear the dungeon because that was the only way to respond to that future threat.

'Is my soul so disgusting that it really needs to be purified?'

While I was deep in my thoughts…

'I wonder how I look in Ha-Yan's eyes… '

Strangely enough, Jung Ha-Yan was glaring at Kim Hyun-Ah. I stared at Jung Ha-Yan and noticed that she was holding my arm so tightly that it started to become painful. It was then that a thought popped into my head.

"Why didn't I think of that?" I asked myself, as it should have been an obvious idea.

'Why did I never think about influencing that elf?'

CHAPTER 354
EASY ELF, EASY ELENA (1)

'Why haven't I thought of this before?'

I knew I had to maintain a serious expression, but I started smiling because even though the problem wasn't resolved just yet, I thought I found a way to resolve it.

I couldn't stop smirking even after Kim Hyun-Ah, Kim Ye-Ri, and Lee Chang-Ryeol found clues together about the dungeon. I heard noises from up front, but I didn't focus too much on them since it would be news about the dungeon our Hyun-Sung had been hiding.

I had to be right because I noticed how the guild members and the elves were preparing to head out. Naturally, Elena looked excited, and it was amusing to see how her ears bobbed up and down as she looked at me. While looking at the innocent and pure Elena, I couldn't understand why I didn't think of this plan until now. In some ways, I wanted to thank Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Hyun-Ah.

'There's really no need to purify my soul.'

There was no need to purify my soul because she was the only person who could see my condition. I just had to make that emerald-haired, big-eared elf not feel uncomfortable around me. Even if Kim Hyun-Sung's plan ended up in failure, as long as I managed to make her believe that her treatment worked, it could actually all work out in the end.

'If her habit changes… '

I was curious about what she would think about me. Belial described me as someone with a disgusting soul, but he didn't even frown at me, not to mention vomit. It could also be thanks to the habit I possessed. For people like Elena, my soul could be really disgusting to the point that they would gag just by noticing it, but it might not be the case for people like Jung Ha-Yan. Of course, Jung Ha-Yan didn't have Elena's attribute, but even if she did have the same attribute as Elena, I didn't think she would vomit as Elena had done.

If Elena's habit or nature changed, then I was sure her opinion of me would change as well. It was kind of difficult, but it was worth a try since I would have to spend a lot of time with Elena anyway.

'This isn't my specialty, though… '

Of course, I wasn't comfortable with the prospects of doing it. Dragging an innocent elf down to the pit was a very difficult task for the reborn Light Ki-Young. However, I had to do it for the greater good. The worst-case scenario I thought of was this innocent elf getting into an unfortunate accident, so this plan would prove beneficial to me as well. I had to face many difficulties to carry out this plan right now, but…

"Oppa, a-are you not feeling well?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"No, I'm fine, Ha-Yan. I was just thinking about something," I answered.

"T-That's a relief," she commented.

One of those difficulties started talking to me, but the timing was perfect because the others had finished preparing to enter the dungeon and were waiting for me. As I walked while trying to cook up a convincing story, I never imagined we would arrive this far.

'I need more time to think… '

Of course, I didn't have that kind of luxury. The party was in a hurry, so they decided to enter right away. It would have been nice if I realized it before departing, but we were already here, so I had no choice but to figure things out amidst the situation. Basically, this quest had a time limit exclusive to me. The moment we entered the dungeon, and before we cleared it, I had to do whatever I could to make Elena realize the true meaning of light.

I walked while shaking my head and heard a familiar voice.

[You've entered the above legendary-ranked dungeon, Twisted Demon's Pond. Confirmed [23/24] participants.]

'Dungeons still feel the same.'

The suffocating atmosphere and pressure… I should have gotten somewhat used to it

by now, but I just couldn't get used to this strange atmosphere. The overall atmosphere of the Twisted Demon's Pond was the same as the Garden of Horror. Truthfully, the two dungeons didn't have much in common aside from the fact that they both had plants. We entered the dungeon through an underground area, and the entire place was humid and wet. The entangled roots and plants were rotten. It was different from the Garden of Horror with green and healthy plants.

Everyone was silent for a while, but before we started moving, Elias spoke cautiously as if he was terrified.

"I didn't believe it, but… it's actually true."

It was time for Kim Hyun-Sung to explain how he was able to easily find the hint that even Everia's rangers couldn't find. He would probably say that he had gotten lucky, but who cared? All that mattered was that they believed his explanation.

"I just got lucky, and I had the fairy's guidance as well. I actually didn't imagine I'd find this place so quickly as well," Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

"We've already investigated this place…" Elias muttered.

"Since you're not used to dungeons, I can understand why you haven't found this place until now," said Kim Hyun-Sung.

"But… you're really amazing," Elias complimented.

"Our guild master has always been a master of finding dungeons. You don't have to be suspicious about it. After we arrived here on this continent, I think he has found over ten dungeons so far. You don't have to blame yourself for something like this. Our guild master is pretty remarkable, even among the foreigners desperate to find a dungeon on their own," Park Deok-Gu chimed in.

"…"

'Nice cover.'

"Mister Deok-Gu is right. From a long time ago. Hyun-Sung oppa… No, the guild master has been skilled in finding places like this," Kim Ye-Ri commented.

"I see. I think I understand how you were able to grow this much despite the fact that

it hasn't been that long since you arrived here," Elias muttered.

"To discover a dungeon is one thing, but capturing it is more important than that. Bro—no, if our guild master and hyung-nim weren't with us, our guild couldn't have grown this big," Park Deok-Gu explained.

"Is that true?" Elias asked.

"Of course. A day isn't enough for me to tell you more about the dungeons we have captured. But *ugh*. I'm kind of nervous since it's an above legendary dungeon… Are you guys used to dungeons?" Park Deok-Gu asked the elves.

"We're not," Elias replied.

"Really?" he asked.

"Yes. If we didn't have a particular reason to go… It's not like we haven't been to one, but it'll be difficult to compare it to all of you because the Everia Kingdom doesn't have a lot of dungeons," he added.

"You don't know that. There could be other hidden dungeons here, just like this one." Park Deok-Gu pointed out.

Even I thought Elias' answer was a bunch of bullshit. He obviously wasn't familiar with dungeons. I expected the elves to show a more reliable side, but they looked kind of awkward in my eyes.

'Tsk, tsk.'

They really seemed like they didn't have a lot of experience. I had no idea how such a powerful group could be so awkward, but they seemed out of place here.

'Should I think of them like they're knights?'

I wasn't sure if this was the proper expression, but they were similar to the knights of the Sacred Democratic Country, who were unfamiliar with clearing dungeons. Unlike mercenaries and professional treasure hunters, they were inexperienced with dungeons. Clearing a dungeon was completely different from wars and battles, and unfortunately, the elves specialized in the latter.

'Of course, they have mastered the basics… '

They might find it difficult to handle ambushes. After all, we weren't in a forest, so our movements would be restricted. The elves also didn't seem to like the musky energy of the dungeon. They came to keep an eye on us, but we had to consider the possibility of them becoming a burden.

"Since you're not used to dungeons… I think it would be best to reform our formation. Is that alright?" Kim Hyun-Sung suggested.

"What do you have in mind?" Elias asked.

"We'll still maintain formation with Mr. Ki-Young and Miss Elena in the center. Besides Mr. Elias, I think it would be best if the others stood in the rear. The rangers, spiritual sorcerers, and the remaining warriors should stand on the flanks, and we'll take care of the front," he replied.

"*Hm…*"

'He doesn't seem happy about that plan.'

If I were in Elias's position, I would be happy about it, but from the elf's point of view, he wasn't satisfied with the idea of placing the elves in the back, and I could understand where his dissatisfaction was coming from.

To be honest, this expedition was made to cure the World Tree. This was the elf's problem and a mission bestowed upon them, so the fact that the Blue Guild was starting to take control was making them feel uncomfortable. If this were a personal matter, they would have been relieved that the Blue Guild was leading the expedition. Unfortunately, they were a part of a large kingdom, so they had to consider many things.

'They're not as dumb as I thought.'

The formation didn't really matter to me.

'Hyun-Sung will capture the dungeon for us anyway… '

I just had to do my best to carry out my plan. I didn't have enough time, and I wasn't capable enough to think of plans to capture the dungeon. As such, it was only right

for me to handle the issue right in front of me.

'How should I go about doing this?'

I had to avoid Kim Hyun-Sung, who was watching me as if I were a baby bird, and the surveillance of the other guild members. On top of that, I had to find out exactly what Elena thought about me. I could only carry out this plan once everything was ready.

'She's the real problem.'

Jung Ha-Yan was the biggest problem. She didn't cast a spell on Elena because Elena was my personal nurse, but I had no idea what Jung Ha-Yan could do if she went on a rampage once again. If I were to consider the possibility of Elena and I rowing on the Twisted Demon's Pond by ourselves, even if I was being cautious, it still wouldn't be enough. Right now, Jung Ha-Yan was fondling the ring with a bright smile, but there was no guarantee that she would remain obedient.

The most ideal scenario was a situation where Elena and I were alone. This was my top priority. I had to talk to her first before I could kickstart my plans. Otherwise, nothing would happen. Still, I had to carry out my plan no matter what.

'How long does it take to capture a dungeon?'

I recalled the supplies we brought with us and estimated that the expedition would last over ten days. Even if we made camp ten times, I would still run out of time to think. In that case, there was only one way I could buy time. I had to grab my chest once again. I was actually getting tired from walking as well. Although we didn't have a carriage, there was no rule about riding a rickshaw, and we had enough manpower for it.

"*Cough*… Miss Elena… I can't breathe…" I muttered.

"What?"

"*Cough, cough*…"

I started acting, and people naturally turned their attention to me. When I collapsed to the ground, the dungeon started to become filled with noises. I looked like a kid screaming for a toy. I made a promise to myself that I would refrain from putting on a ridiculous show like this if I could help it, but a human's promise was usually broken

quite easily. I imagined that I was on the brink of death, and when I started foaming at the mouth, people quickly ran over to my side.

'It's not my fault… '

The unpleasant air of a twisted place was bound to gnaw at a pure soul. Right now, I wanted to be isolated from everyone else. In addition, everyone knew that the beautiful elf caretaker had to be with me.

'I don't want to walk, you bastards!'

CHAPTER 355
EASY ELF, EASY ELENA (2)

'This is more comfortable than I thought.'

The situation was going according to plan, but I was feeling so comfortable that I started feeling guilty. I glanced outside and saw that the guild members and the elves were still fighting. They were struggling because of the monster that suddenly appeared.

'It's definitely complicated.'

As Kim Hyun-Sung mentioned, the majority of the main monsters in Twisted Demon's Pond were demons. They were lower-ranked demons that couldn't be compared to Belial, but this dungeon wasn't a rare or average-ranked dungeon. This was an above legendary dungeon, so I was sure that a legendary-ranked demon or monster was going to appear. Based on my experiences so far, mythic-ranked beings would probably appear in dungeons several ranks higher than legendary dungeons. In that sense, my Semi-Mythic job, Alchemist of Light, was probably useful in many ways, but I wasn't able to do any research about my job since I was often lying in bed. It would take me some time, but I could create a potion that could reveal some information hidden in the system.

'It's just wishful thinking, though… '

I couldn't help but think about many other things since I was in a comfortable position, and the expedition party fighting hard in battle didn't have the same luxury as I had. They looked pretty serious as they fought against demons that were at least epic rank. Park Deok-Gu and Yoo Ah-Young looked anxious, and the others, including Jung Ha-Yan, didn't look so different. They were taking this as seriously as they could because they were trying to clear the difficult dungeon as fast as possible with the elves.

'They seem pretty tense… '

Of course, the reason they were so tense was me. Light Ki-Young was being

tormented, and his tainted soul was threatening his life, so the pressure to quickly clear the dungeon was boring down on them. I was worried that an accident would occur, but as soon as I saw Kim Hyun-Ah's godly move tearing apart a demon's head, I felt relieved. It had been three days since I started traveling comfortably on a rickshaw, and Kim Hyun-Ah's party was moving along pretty smoothly.

I glanced outside, and Elena spoke cautiously beside me.

"You don't need to worry too much, Father Lee Ki-Young. I'm sure nothing will happen."

'I'm not worried about them… ''

However, such a misunderstanding wouldn't hurt.

"I want to help them in any way that I can… I feel uncomfortable to be the only one lying here," I told her.

"It's fine, and like I've mentioned before, you have to avoid going outside as much as possible. The Twisted Demon's Pond and the tainted mana the demons are releasing will affect your soul negatively. Moving thoughtlessly right now will make the situation even worse. The Blue Guild and the Elune Knights are strong. Nothing bad will happen," she explained.

"It's not because I don't trust them…" I commented.

"You have to believe that your comrades understand how you're feeling, Father Lee Ki-Young," she added.

'I'm sure they do… '

"I'm sure we'll reach the end of the dungeon without any issues. Please prioritize yourself before the people outside. That way, our comrades will be able to fight without any worries," Elena said.

"Yes, you're right," I agreed.

Despite saying that I agreed, I still wore a sad face. I saw Elena looking at me worriedly.

[Nature - A Curious Supporter]

[Checking Elena Everia's Unique Habit.]

[Emerald-Colored Delusional Flower]

Considering her upbringing, the unique habit she possessed could be explained. In addition to being stuck in the Everia Kingdom all her life, she was also really curious about humans and other nations, so her habit became similar to her nature. If I were asked if I disliked her or not, I would say that I liked her. Her habit and nature were fine, and I really liked how she was curious about everything. Her unique habit also synergizes with mine. However, the part of her that I liked the most was the fact that she was like a little girl full of dreams, untainted by the cold reality. After all, it was easier to deal with someone like her than someone who had already been tainted by reality.

'I have to do something about her… '

The most important task was already completed. The small space was uncomfortable, but being alone with her was a big achievement. In addition, we were isolated from the outside because of magic, so this was the perfect time to talk with her. Of course, the problem of her instinctively disliking me was still there, but the closer we got to each other, or the more her mindset changed, the easier it would be for her to accept me.

'The problem is I don't know which method I should use.'

I wasn't against getting a little bit closer to her in the current situation, which meant I had to talk to her as much as possible. I had to know more about her and figure out what kind of life she had been living so far. Knowing and understanding each other was the first step in establishing a relationship with someone.

"Aren't you tired?" I said.

"I'm fine," she replied.

"But I'm sure—"

"I'm fine, Father Lee Ki-Young. No matter how tainted your soul is, I don't think of it as dirty. In my eyes, the righteousness within you is more prominent than your

tainted soul," Elena said, interrupting me.

'Thanks for saying that.'

"…"

"It's true, Father Lee Ki-Young. As I've mentioned before, I've seen you and the heroes of light through the goddess' mirror, and it was an amazing sight. I still remember it so vividly that I still get goosebumps whenever I remember it. Even after hundreds of years, I will never forget how the four heroes remained steadfast and faced that huge demon," she continued.

"It wasn't that amazing, Miss Elena. I'm sure others would've done the same," I told her.

"No. I imagined myself being in the same place as well, but no matter how many times I thought about it, all I could think about was collapsing to the ground. The heroes of light gave me courage as well," she added.

"Courage?" I asked.

"Yes. It hasn't been that long since I was born, but I had been spending all my life in the Everia Kingdom, just like all the elves. Ludwig and Elias always said that the world outside the kingdom was dangerous, and I grew up hearing a lot of stories about humans. I was told every time that the outside world was a scary and dangerous place," she explained.

"So that's why you stayed in the kingdom," I commented.

"Yes, because the world outside the kingdom was a scary place for me," she said.

"You didn't seem that way…" I said.

"I told you. The heroes of light are the ones who gave me courage. If it weren't for the scenes I saw in the goddess' mirror, I would have never left the Everia Kingdom, and I wouldn't have discovered my calling. Have you heard of high elves before?" Elena asked.

"Yes, I have. A high elf wouldn't be born for a very long time, and you're the current generation's high elf, Miss Elena," I replied.

“To be honest, there’s nothing special about being a high elf. Besides the fact that I have received the blessings of the World Tree and Elune, nothing else is different. Of course, historically…” she trailed off.

“Yes?” I asked.

“Historically, the ancestral guardians played a big role. A long time ago, when the continent was still a huge supercontinent. Humans and other races fought together from time to time, the ancestral guardians showed up and faced the dangers themselves. The elf comrades mentioned in fairy tales or history books are the ancestral guardians,” she explained.

“I see…” I commented.

“I don’t know if it’s because of that, but I thought I had a role to do as well, and you helped me find it,” she added.

“The calling you mentioned before…” I pointed out.

“Yes, I received divine guidance. Elune’s divine guidance is for me to purify your tainted soul and to be with the heroes of light,” she answered.

I had no idea what she was talking about, but it was good news. After all, no matter which angle one used to look at what she just said, it seemed that she had always looked at me in a favorable light.

‘It’s better if this misunderstanding continues.’

The fact that Elena believed that she had received divine guidance could become useful to me.

I contemplated for a moment, but I immediately made a decision, so there was no reason to waste time. It was time to put on a show, so when I frowned, Elena immediately approached me and checked my condition. When I continued the show, she revealed a desperate look, and I saw her quickly pouring her holy power into me. Obviously, it wasn’t really effective. I needed a slightly different type of treatment this time, so I made sure to take shallow breaths as much as possible, and tears even dripped down my cheeks. Light Ki-Young had twenty-six years of acting experience, so shedding some crocodile tears was a piece of cake.

“Are you alright? Father Lee Ki-Young, are you okay?” Elena asked.

“*Cou… gh…*”

“Father!”

I didn’t forget to make my arms quiver. This was actually the most important part because Elena had to know that she couldn’t treat me with her holy power anymore. She kept on pouring her holy power into me, but it wasn’t working because I was still trembling like crazy. The revelation stupefied Elena.

“N-No…” she muttered.

I looked at her and showed the whites of my eyes. Elena looked like she wanted to call for help from outside because I saw her looking out the window from inside the isolated rickshaw. However, there wasn’t anyone who could help her because the group was in the middle of a battle. The climax of the event I prepared was coming, so I twisted my body and stretched my arms into the air. Sorrow filled my eyes, and I looked like I was begging someone to save me.

“Elune… Elune… please…” Elena begged.

“*Cough… Ugh… Pant…*”

“Elune…” she called out again.

Elena looked like she could feel my pain because she started crying as well. She definitely realized that she had to do something because I felt her grabbing my arms in the air. All of a sudden, my condition stabilized.

“*Huh?*”

Elena’s tear-streaked face became filled with relief and suspicion. I could understand why she was suspicious. After all, I looked like my body was about to be torn apart just now, but I suddenly started to stabilize.

“*Ah…*”

‘That’s right… ’

“No way…” Elena mumbled.

‘Yes… ’

This was the second part of my weakening soul plan. Holy power wasn’t what I needed anymore. Only the high elf Elune had selected could save Light Ki-Young from the brink of death.

[An Epic-Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Stop! You Cursed Demon! (0/1)]

[The Epic-Ranked Forced Quest has been canceled for an unknown reason.]

CHAPTER 356
EASY ELF, EASY ELENA (3)

'It's fine.'

I thought something happened just now, but I didn't think too much about it because Elena's reaction was the most important right now. She was dumbfounded, but she seemed to be relieved when she saw me stabilizing because she started taking deep breaths. The sudden change in the situation definitely rattled her because her ears were trembling, and her emerald-colored hair was drenched in sweat. However, it seemed that taking care of me was more urgent than her image because she immediately walked toward me.

"Are you… are you okay?" Elena asked.

"Yes, I'm fine, Miss Elena," I replied.

"I'm glad. I'm really glad," she commented.

Despite coming up with the idea on the spot, the result wasn't that bad considering her reaction. It was a bit of an impulsive decision, but it was worth it.

Legendary-ranked job and attribute. Magic and luck stats over 90 points. Many had expectations for Elena thanks to her racial attribute as the high elf. She would also become a highly-influential person in the Everia Kingdom. If I had met her a bit earlier, I would have tried to recruit her to our party no matter what, but since our lives had drastically improved, I wasn't desperate to find talented players. In addition, recruiting someone like her to our party was pretty risky. I threw the dice, and after making the decision to go through it, I had to go all out.

I spoke cautiously, and Elena looked surprised.

"You don't look so good… Did something happen? Did my condition get worse…?"

"No, it's nothing like that. That's not the case, but… yes. No, that's definitely not it. By the way, how are you feeling?" Elena asked.

“Well, I feel a bit more comfortable than usual,” I replied.

“Really?” she asked.

“Yes…” I answered.

“I see…” she mumbled.

“I don’t know what happened, but thank you,” I told her.

“What?” she asked, surprised.

“I’m talking about how you treated me just now,” I answered.

“*Ah*, I see. It was nothing. I just did what was right,” she replied.

“Maybe Elune’s divine guidance…” I trailed off.

“Yes?”

“…really does exist,” I finished.

“…”

“To be honest, I somewhat realized that I didn’t have long to live, Miss Elena,” I told her.

“What? You knew…” she muttered.

“Of course, I don’t know my exact condition, but I have been noticing symptoms here and there. I had somewhat given up, and I often thought maybe the role I had received was going to end here,” I explained.

“…”

“When you told me that you received divine guidance from Elune… I thought that perhaps there was still a reason for me to stay on this continent. It could be something even more important than what happened in Laios. *Haha*. *Cough, cough*…”

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young!” Elena exclaimed.

It was absurd, but she hurriedly grabbed my hands and looked at me worriedly.

"Yes! I agree. I'm certain there's a reason why Elune ordered me to help you. Yes, I'm sure of it. And there could be a different reason why Elune wanted… wanted us to meet…" she muttered.

'That's how people would usually think… '

"A different reason… What do you mean?" I asked.

"I-It's nothing. It's nothing…" she stuttered.

Elena lowered her head. She still looked uncomfortable about something, but her red face showed that she was thinking about many things. Well, her reaction was understandable.

'Has she even held a man's hand before?'

Elena was an elf who had been living in the forest of Everia for almost two hundred years. In addition, she seemed extremely ignorant about the relationship between a man and a woman. I could deduce that much because she didn't seem uncomfortable whenever she grabbed my hand to shake it or whenever she placed her hand on my chest to treat me. There was a huge chance that she still had no idea that her treatment up until now was making contact between members of the opposite sex because she was just treating me like a patient. However, the situation I established just now would change everything.

Something like…

'Maybe Elune has other plans.'

Or…

'Maybe there's a different reason why Elune… made me meet this man.'

Once these thoughts were engraved into her head, her simple treatment wouldn't be just a *simple* treatment anymore. She was a dreamy girl interested in the will of the gods and destiny. As such, there was nothing sweeter than telling her our meeting was made possible by an unknown god. I knew she would find such words sweet because the romance novels published on the continent contained keywords such as

the will of the gods, divine guidance, and destiny. These stupid lines affected even one's imagination, but the stories written in those novels were happening to Elena in real life. Still, I couldn't expect her to change completely, but I was sure she would become conscious of me.

'I think my plan will proceed faster than I expected.'

After establishing a fast, but stable relationship, it would be easier to plant ideas into her head. Actually, I didn't have to do that. If things went smoothly, everything would work out naturally even if I didn't do that.

I continued nodding, but I suddenly felt a chilling wave of energy from somewhere.

"*Ah…*"

Between the small window attached so that we could take a look at what was happening outside, I saw a pair of eyes. I immediately realized that Jung Ha-Yan was looking into the carriage, and I felt like a snake was slithering on my back.

'Shit.'

I was surprised, but when I saw her slowly moving away from the rickshaw, I realized that she hadn't caught on to what was going on. She was simply curious about what I was doing. However, I couldn't help but feel guilty when I realized that she was worried about me.

'I'll do better, Ha-Yan.'

It was a meaningless promise, but it helped suppress the guilt I was feeling.

Right now, I had to take care of the issue before me, and that was when I started tapping on my knee.

Crack!

Booooooom!!!

"*Kyaaaaaaaah!*"

A loud explosion reverberated, and an ear-splitting scream made me cover my eyes. I

had no idea why, but a tremendous force shook the enclosed rickshaw. I immediately looked outside through the small window, but I couldn't see the party members. No, we had to be falling because my body was rolling around in the enclosed rickshaw. Naturally, my body entangled Elena's body. I thought about stabilizing my body somehow, but it was difficult to cast a spell in a situation like this.

'What the hell is going on? Shit!'

I was sure the Elven Knights or whoever was protecting the rickshaw caused some kind of trouble, and I thought about the possibility of Jung Ha-Yan causing trouble, but it was unlikely. I couldn't imagine her harming me matter how hard I thought about it. There was a chance that she would try to kill Elena, but she wouldn't have chosen to send the rickshaw flying as a method to kill her.

'There's an accident.'

There was a huge chance that we were sent flying away because of an accident. While the elves were still awkwardly trying to adjust to the dungeon's environment, something probably happened. I wasn't sure if Kim Hyun-Sung or Jung Ha-Yan were coming after me, but if they were in the middle of a fight or in a special situation, there was a chance that they made sure the rickshaw was isolated and protected. Still, not knowing the situation outside was a huge disadvantage.

Fortunately, in addition to being soundproof, the rickshaw was also extremely sturdy. However, it had been quite a while since we started falling, but we still hadn't landed. It could only mean that we were falling into a *really* deep place. I had no idea how deep we had fallen so far, but I thought that something had to be done.

"*Kyaaaaaaaaaaaah!*"

"Damn… it!"

Crack!

Boom!

Crack!

However, it wasn't that easy.

I heard many noises, along with the sound of the rickshaw bumping into various objects outside. If it weren't for the spells cast earlier, the rickshaw would have long been shattered into pieces.

'Are they not going to cast a floating spell?'

Since Jung Ha-Yan, Hwang Jung-Yeon, and Han Sora didn't notice what was happening to me, the situation had to be more serious than I thought. The fact that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't even come here was proof that something had definitely gone wrong.

Light no longer came in through the window. I frantically pulled Elena close to me, and with a snap of my finger, a dragon's tail popped up and wrapped around Elena. The protective spells cast on the rickshaw would probably protect us, but there was a huge chance that we would have to face an unknown situation on our own, so I had to make as many preparations as possible to protect ourselves.

'Damn it. Damn it.'

I flinched at the loud booms, but I was fine. It was also interesting how the rickshaw didn't even break. I had no idea how many stacks of protective spells they cast on the rickshaw, but they had to have cast so many protective spells as if they were protecting a housing complex.

'Our mages sure are competent.'

I wasn't sure if they cast a shock mitigation spell, but I felt like I didn't get even a bruise even though I had been rolling around earlier.

The surrounding was so dark I couldn't see anything. I cast a spell, and a small light appeared to reveal our surroundings. My body was in an awkward situation, so I raised myself up and saw Elena trembling while tightly holding on to me. She was definitely confused by our current situation because I could see her eyes quivering, and I was the same. I was curious about how we even got into such a terrible situation when the expedition was going so well.

I bit my lips, and Elena instantly moved her face closer to mine and started talking cautiously. There was no need to mention the look on her face.

"M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young. W-What happened?" Elena asked.

“I’m not sure. I think the shock caused us to fall…” I replied.

“W-Where are we?” she asked.

“I don’t know either. I can’t see anything outside… I think it’s best if we figure out the situation outside first. We’ll have to consider the worst-case scenario of being separated from the party. We also have to consider the possibility that we’re trapped,” I explained.

“*Oh,* dear…” she muttered.

“First…”

We had to figure out where we were and if anyone else fell with us. I searched through the Infinity Bag Kim Hyun-Sung gave to me as a gift and retrieved a Dragon Breath Potion. We could face an unknown situation, so I prepared it just in case.

Elena was looking at me nervously, but I had to open the carriage door slowly, and the creaking noise was louder than I thought. I looked around while gulping my own saliva, but this cave had to be *really* big because I couldn’t see anything.

All of a sudden, something fell from the sky.

I thought our lovely regressor had arrived to save us, but I saw an unexpected person.

‘Shit.’

The individual wasn’t even alive. What had fallen was an elf’s corpse with its lower body missing.

“This isn’t good…” I commented.

My lips started to get dry.

CHAPTER 357
EASY ELF, EASY ELENA (4)

It was one of the Elune Knights pulling the rickshaw. The shock from the fall made them unrecognizable, but Mind's Eye told me that it was one of the elves in our expedition party.

'Did they fall from where they originally stood?'

I had no idea what was going on, but one thing I was sure of was that an unknown accident occurred, and the expedition party was caught off guard. The accident definitely happened all of a sudden, and since I had been in the rickshaw all this while, I had no idea just what exactly happened.

'Who was in the back?'

The majority of the Blue Guild members were in the front, so the ones in the back were Ahn Ki-Mo, who stayed in the back to peel, and the elves pulling the rickshaw. Since this poor guy ended up like this, it was safe to assume that the accident happened in the back.

'Is Ahn Ki-Mo safe?'

Since he didn't fall with us, he was probably safe, but he could have also gotten stuck somewhere in the middle. There was also a chance that the other guild members fell with us as well.

'Did the ground collapse or something?'

I made many assumptions, but I couldn't come up with an answer. One thing I was sure of was that the situation wasn't good. Anyway, if we truly got trapped here, we were in the worst situation. An above legendary dungeon. We had no one else to protect us, and our supplies were limited. I knew my current situation was grim, so I couldn't help but frown. Naturally, I looked through my belongings to see what I had with me and saw that I had a portable alchemist kit.

'I carry this around with me all the time… '

I had enough food and water to last me about five days.

'If I consume it little by little, the food should last me twenty days.'

Dialugia catalyst.

'I brought enough of this.'

I also had ten legendary Stamina Potions, but aside from those potions, all I had were catalysts and materials.

'It's not enough.'

I should be able to survive with them, but the issue was how I could protect myself. All of a sudden, I started missing Juliena, the sword I left in Lindel. After she awakened, there wasn't a need for her to participate in battles anymore, but it was my mistake to leave her behind.

'I'll have to carry her around again when I return.'

I knew I had been negligent recently, but the fact that I had been neglecting my self-development became even more apparent in my current situation. I didn't have much time to train since I had been pretty busy back then, but it was undeniable that I had gotten lazy recently. However, nothing would really change even if I started regretting my previous actions right now.

I shook my head and immediately started searching the dead elf's body. I had to see if they had something useful on them. I searched thoroughly, but all I got was a dagger on their waist. I didn't really know how to use it, but it was better than nothing.

'Nothing else… '

"M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young," Elena called out.

I heard her voice when I was looking around slowly. She had to be nervous when she noticed that it was taking me a long time to come back.

“Don’t worry, Miss Elena. I’m coming back now,” I told her.

When I returned to the carriage, I saw Elena looking at me from inside the rickshaw. The way her ears quivered showed that she was scared, but she felt relieved when she saw me and took a deep breath. However, she still looked uncomfortable. She reminded me of people in tutorial dungeons. I knew she would be like this. After all, despite her high stats, she was relatively inexperienced. In some ways, she was a burden.

“H-How is it outside?” she asked.

“The situation doesn’t look that great. I have no idea where we are, and I can’t see anything around us… I think we should stay inside the rickshaw and wait for the expedition party to come. I think we should stay here at least until the protective spells disappeared. If they’re safe, I’m sure they’ll come down here to get us,” I suggested.

“Yes, you’re right, Father Lee Ki-Young. I’m sure they’ll come soon,” she agreed.

‘I hope that happens.’

“Father Lee Ki-Young…” she started.

“Yes?”

“I’m saying this just in case, but… if no one comes here—”

“That won’t happen. I don’t know how long it’s going to take them, but I’m sure they’ll come and find us,” I interrupted her.

There was no way they wouldn’t come and look for us. I had no idea how this happened, but I didn’t think the guild members would die here. Perhaps I just didn’t want to think negatively, but it was hard to imagine Kim Hyun-Sung dying in a place like this, and it was the same for Jung Ha-Yan. If those two were alive, I was sure they would choose to look for me rather than clear the dungeon. They knew where Elena and I fell, so I was sure that they would head here right after some preparations.

‘It’ll take some time to fix.’

However, I couldn’t help but feel relieved that I wasn’t with the others when I

imagined how Jung Ha-Yan had to be bawling and making a fuss right now. I was sure everyone was struggling to calm her down.

'It does worry me a bit that I can't see Anemone's Eye… '

There was a chance that Jung Ha-Yan couldn't use it because we were so far away. After all, her stalking camera's range wasn't that huge in the first place.

"The problem is how long we can… endure. We're safe for now, but we don't know when monsters will come charging at us. It'd be nice if the protective spells stays active, but it'll probably last only a day more at this rate. We don't have enough food either," I explained.

"How long…" she questioned.

"Even if we save, we probably only have ten days," I replied.

"*Oh,* my…" she commented.

"I think it'll be best to save as much as we can for now. Do you have anything with you…" I asked.

"L-Ludwig takes care of all of my belongings… I'm sorry," she apologized.

"It's fine. No one could have imagined that something like this would happen anyway. By the way—" I stopped talking because I felt the ground moving.

"…"

Elena held her breath. The ground's movement scared her. I opened the rickshaw's door and looked around. I knew I didn't imagine it. The ground was actually moving.

"Wait…" I said.

"I-It's dangerous, Mr. Lee Ki-Young…" Elena stuttered.

"Isn't this… moving right now?" I asked.

"What?"

“I think the entire ground is moving. I’m sure of it,” I told her.

However, that wasn’t the only issue. Moments later, there was a loud noise, and I could feel something moving.

‘Shit. Is this… ’

Naturally, I ran to where the elf's corpse was because something felt off. The corpse that was missing its lower half didn’t seem any different from before, but the severed section bothered me. It wasn’t a clean cut, but it wasn’t torn apart by force as well. I couldn’t read traces since I wasn’t a Ranger, but I could deduce that much. It was as if a giant stapler had ripped the elf’s upper body from its lower body. The surface of the cut was uneven, and it was even covered in this weird saliva.

[Salit’s Saliva - Semi-Mythic]

[This material cannot be used as an alchemist’s catalyst.]

‘Damn it… ’

I continued looking around using Mind’s Eye. I wanted good news, but Mind’s Eye didn’t see anything tantamount to good news.

[Salit’s Intestines - Semi-Mythic]

‘Shit.’

[Salit’s Intestines - Semi-Mythic]

Nothing changed no matter where I looked.

‘We got eaten.’

Elena and I had arrived in the intestines of an unknown large monster. The upper half of that elf’s body arrived here after they were torn apart by the large monster’s teeth. The lower half of their body was probably outside or stuck in the monster’s teeth. Fortunately, the rickshaw Elena and I were riding survived the journey until the monster’s intestines.

‘We have to get out of here.’

We would get digested if we were to stay here. It was a fact even Park Deok-Gu knew, so if we only waited for our comrades to come, the monster would end up digesting us even before they could arrive.

“Miss Elena, please come outside. We have to move,” I told her.

“What?” Elena questioned.

“I think we’re currently inside a monster’s belly. I think it’s best if we get out of this place right now,” I suggested.

“W-What are you…” she stuttered.

“I’ll explain while moving,” I said, interrupting her.

A confused Elena soon walked out, and she frowned as soon as she stepped outside. It was understandable since I had just told her we were inside a monster’s belly.

“Where do we need to go?” she asked.

‘I want to know that as well… ’

Obviously, the organs of this monster were completely different from humans, so I had no idea where everything was located.

‘I wonder if it’s the same as Dialugia.’

Starting out with something was more comfortable than starting out with nothing, and although there was a difference in size, the physical examination I had done on Dialugia should help us in this place. Dialugia’s organs demolished everything she consumed and turned them into mana. I wasn’t certain, but this monster’s body could be working the same way. A Semi-Mythic monster. It was safe to assume that this monster’s organs worked differently than average and rare-ranked monsters, so I hurriedly looked around.

The monster had to have an organ that delivered energy throughout its body, especially to the heart, but when I looked around, I couldn’t really find anything significant since the place we were in was huge. However, I could feel mana flowing somewhere.

“Miss Elena, please take a look and see if there’s a place where sound can be heard. It can be the smallest sound,” I requested.

“…”

“Miss Elena?” I called out.

“…”

“Miss Elena!” I yelled.

“*Ah…* yes, yes! Mr. Lee Ki-Young. What did you…” Elena asked.

‘Ah, man. She’s out of it.’

I could understand it since anyone would react the same way as her if they were suddenly told that they were inside a monster’s stomach. She was actually brave enough due to the fact that she didn’t start screaming and directly went crazy. I momentarily thought about abandoning her, but a priest who could do something in this current situation was helpful.

I grabbed her hand, and she flinched as she looked up at me. Her ears were quivering, and her face was filled with fear. I realized that comforting her was better than scolding her, so I patted her head slowly and started talking.

“Don’t worry, Miss Elena.”

“*Ah*… yes,” she replied.

“Even if something happens, I’ll protect you no matter what,” I added.

“…”

I was starting to get used to saying those cheesy lines, and obviously, what I told her just now was a lie. If we did end up in a dangerous situation, I could just abandon her, but saying such lines to her was the right thing to do. I tightened my grip on her hand, and I felt her returning the gesture in kind. Her eyes were still filled with fear, but she had to have made up her mind about something because she bit her lips and nodded.

“It’s fine. I-If I… If something happens to me, you must… you must…” Elena stuttered.

‘Yeah, I like that kind of mindset… ’

“I’m sure we’ll both get out safely. Together,” I told her.

“Yes, together,” she repeated.

“Now then…”

“Father Lee Ki-Young,” she called out.

“Yes?”

“If nothing special is happening, I think it’ll be better if we continue holding hands. You could get a seizure again,” she suggested.

“You’re right, we should do that,” I said.

‘She’s too easy.’

Elena’s blushing face wasn’t just an illusion. Our fingers soon intertwined, and she quickly lowered her head, seemingly a bit nervous.

CHAPTER 358
EASY ELF, EASY ELENA (5)

“Are the others really safe?” Elena asked.

“I’m sure they are safe. Besides, we’re the ones who fell, I didn’t see any traces of other people here, so I’m sure they’re heading to where we are,” I replied.

“I see…”

“There’s a high chance that this monster is the dungeon boss of the Twisted Demon’s Pond dungeon, and it should also be the reason the World Tree is rotting. I’m not sure why the dungeon boss that’s supposed to appear at the end suddenly ambushed the party, but if there aren’t any other issues, another expedition team should reach this place within fifteen days,” I continued.

I told her I had no idea why this monster ambushed the expedition, but I actually had a hint. It was just an assumption of mine, but it was highly likely that the monster was staying at the center of the Twisted Pond. Even though this place was turning into a dungeon, a huge amount of mana was still required to keep the demons here. Demons couldn’t really stay for an extended period of time on the continent, so the mana flowing out from the World Tree was like a visa that made it possible for them to stay for a long time. As such, there was a huge chance that the monster, Salit, was staying closest to the Twisted Pond. Considering that, there was no way a monster like this would suddenly appear near the entrance of the dungeon without any proper reason. It was safe to assume that the monster had been targeting us since the expedition started rather than saying that it was just a coincidence that it found us.

‘I don’t think a battle broke out after that.’

It definitely decided to retreat after quietly swallowing the rickshaw we were in. It had to have happened so quickly that Kim Hyun-Sung, the other guild members, and the elves at the rearguard didn’t manage to react on time. I was curious about why it targeted me, but I had an idea. After all, even Demon Lord Belial wanted me, so it was only natural that Salit wanted me as well. However, there was another issue.

'Why did this bastard swallow me?'

Belial expressed no desire to kill me. It was all because contracts were achievements for demons. He even showed me his kindness by saying that he wanted to see me again. If I assumed that Salit swallowed me to kill me, it would be inconsistent with what I knew about the demons.

'Perhaps it doesn't have that kind of mindset?'

It could be moving instinctively. After all, not all monsters categorized as demons would behave like the 72 Demon Lords. It would be nice to get more information about this monster, but that was all the information I had. It was unfortunate that Mind's Eye still provided a limited amount of information despite being legendary. My job was influencing the amount of information I could see about the monster as well.

"By the way… I-I'm really relieved," Elena spoke.

"About what?" I asked.

"If it weren't for you, I would have probably…" she trailed off.

"You don't have to think that way. We managed to come this far because of you, Miss Elena," I told her.

"That's not true. You were the one who found out that we're currently inside a monster, and I didn't… I was just scared. I'm actually still really scared, and it's interesting how you can remain so calm… I'm sorry I couldn't be of much help," she explained.

"*Haha*. I'm not as courageous as you think I am. I'm actually the same as you," I told her.

"What?"

"I'm just as scared as you are," I said.

"But how…"

"Who knows? I don't know either, but I may have gotten used to this kind of

situation," I replied.

"…"

"It could also be because you're with me, Miss Elena. If I were by myself, I'm sure I would have found it difficult to endure. To have someone else to rely on is already a big help," I continued.

"*Ah*… T-Thank you for telling me that…" she stuttered.

"I didn't say it just because I wanted you to feel better. I'm being honest. If you weren't holding my hand right now, I would have passed out already. I'm very grateful even for that," I added.

"*Ah*."

While we were walking through a small passage, the emerald-haired elf let out a brief yelp. She had to have reached her limits because her legs were incessantly trembling. It was only natural because we had been walking for two days straight without proper rest. Even I was reaching my limits. She had never walked this much, so it was just natural for her to feel tired. Her base stats were high, so she had enough stamina, but her feet probably couldn't take it anymore.

"We should rest," I suggested.

"No, we can't—"

"I'm tired as well. We've been walking for two days straight without proper rest," I interrupted.

"…"

'I'm exhausted, so you don't have to feel guilty.'

While we were resting, I looked around, but I didn't find anything strange. I thought perhaps there could be monsters inside this monster, but I didn't find anything out of the ordinary.

This was the perfect time to rest. We were in a passage that led to the next organ, and it was the perfect place to hide.

'Well, I'm not even sure if it'll be helpful… '

However, it was better than nothing.

I patted the spot next to me after sitting down, and Elena sat down there. She was definitely in pain because she was frowning, and I realized my assumption was correct.

"Can you show me your feet?" I requested.

"*Huh*? No, it's…"

I removed her boots before she could answer and saw blisters all over her feet. It looked painful because there was blood on her boots, but she seemed more embarrassed than in pain.

Elena blushed as she stuttered, "I-I'm okay. I can heal myself."

"You should've said—"

"I didn't want to worry you, but I-I'm okay now, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," she interrupted.

"No, you should save your holy power. We don't know what will happen, so you must use your stamina when necessary. I happen to have a potion, so it'll be faster to treat your blister with it," I suggested.

"What?" she asked.

'I'm not stupid enough to let this chance pass by.'

Our priority was to get out of this place alive, but I still had to work on my plan. I felt like we were close to our destination, and she wasn't really resisting me as well. I wasn't sure whether it was because we were inside a demon or because she had gotten used to my presence, but she didn't vomit or even frown. As I was slowly caressing her feet, she didn't seem to dislike it. Actually, she seemed shy because she lowered her head.

After taking out the potion from my pocket, I slowly poured it on her feet, and the unfamiliar feeling caused her ears to flinch.

'The potion is kind of thick, but this is actually better.'

I started massaging her feet, and her ears started flapping with every movement. She was trying her best to hold her breath, but she was shy. For female elves, showing one's feet had to be a very embarrassing thing to do because she was kind of overreacting, in my opinion.

'They're really small.'

Compared to her body, Elena's feet were kind of small, and even though I wasn't sure what she thought of what I was doing, I had no choice but to treat her feet as delicately as I could. Since I was already massaging her, I placed my hand on her calf, and she didn't flinch or resist me. She actually nodded, which meant she was okay with it.

"I should loosen up your muscles as well," I suggested.

"What? *Ah*, there's no need…"

"I'm sure loosening up your muscles as well will make the potion even more effective. I'm not trying to brag, but the potion I made has many benefits. You'll feel better if you stay like this for a bit, so you should eat something while waiting," I told her.

"I see…"

"Here you go, Miss Elena," I offered.

"No, there's no need to do this. You should be the one eating—"

"I'm used to it. I actually don't eat in situations like this, and I'm still full from the food I had earlier. Please take it. It's not much, but it'll suppress your hunger, at the very least," I interrupted.

"T-Thank you for the food," Elena stuttered.

"No need to thank me."

I smiled lightly and saw Elena accepting the food. She seemed guilty about receiving so much help from me, but she seemed happy about it at the same time.

'Things are working out better than I expected.'

The quick progress of my plan surprised me, but there was no need to feel weirded out. This wasn't like some action or horror movie where couples often kissed during the climax of the movie. The more desperate and dangerous a situation was, the easier it would be to be fond of someone. I wasn't sure whether my heart was racing because I was nervous or because I was feeling something within my heart, but this innocent elf in front of me was hanging on to an unknown divine guidance.

It wouldn't be weird if she became fond of me. After all, I was taking care of her. In addition, I would profit if she became fond of me. Once the expedition found Salit and defeated it, Elena would immediately treat me, so it was better to set everything up beforehand.

'They're coming, right?'

Obviously, I felt kind of nervous while chewing on the jerky I was eating earlier. We were heading toward the monster's heart in case the expedition party got into an accident, which would delay their arrival. Unfortunately, I still wasn't sure if things would even work out. The monster's insides were just as hard as the outside, so I wasn't sure if the Dragon Breath Potion would even do any damage to it.

'She also doesn't look like she can deal a lot of damage… '

Anyway, the fact that we would eventually die if we stayed here remained. We managed to get out of the monster's intestines, but there was no guarantee that we wouldn't get demolished if we stayed in the other parts of its body.

All of a sudden, Elena started trembling as I continued holding her hand.

'What's wrong with her?'

She looked kind of nervous. I was worried that something had happened, but that didn't seem to be the case. She was moving her lips as if there was something she really wanted to ask, but she just couldn't bring herself to ask. I waited, and I expected her to tell me that she wanted to go to the bathroom, but what she said surprised me.

"Father Lee Ki-Young," Elena called out.

“Yes?” I replied.

“Y-You see…” she trailed off.

“Yes, Miss Elena?”

“W-What’s your relationship… with Miss Jung Ha-Yan…” she asked.

‘Wasn’t expecting that.’

Elena bit her lips. She looked relieved after finally saying what she wanted to say, and her face also turned as red as a red radish.

‘Look at her being gutsy… ’

In my eyes, Elena looked pretty cute for saying the words I wanted her to say. On one hand, things didn’t work out, but on the other hand, I felt like things were working out very well.

As I looked at the seemingly anxious Elena, I smiled brightly and answered, “I love her.”

CHAPTER 359
EASY ELF, EASY ELENA (6)

“I’m sure they’re alive. Even noonim said they were, so I’m sure they’re fine. Yeah! I’m sure of it,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“…”

“Hey, don’t be like that. O-Of course, I’m worried as well, but that’s what noonim said. I’m sure they’re okay! H-Hyung-nim has always been resilient, and even if he were left alone in the desert, I’m sure he’ll survive. The fact that he’s alive even now is proof that he has found a way… I’m sure of it. He’s safe. Yes, I’m sure,” he continued.

“…”

I[1] gulped because of the depressing atmosphere. Everyone wasn't like their usual self. Mr. Park Deok-Gu seemed nervous despite repeatedly saying that they were okay, and unlike her usual self, Miss Sun Hee-Young was spacing out. Of course, the person who changed the most was the Guild Master of the Blue Guild, Kim Hyun-Sung. Everyone found it difficult to approach him. He seemed like he was suppressing it as best as he could, but the killing intent he was suppressing still seeped out of his body, making the air around him look twisted.

‘Has he ever shown that side of him before?’

I didn’t think so. Of course, it wasn’t like I often talked to the guild master. After all, I usually stayed with Miss Jung Ha-Yan and the sub guild master, but I knew that he had never shown that side of him before because I heard it from my comrades, Yoo Ah-Young and Chang-Ryeol oppa. He usually looked serious, but he would sometimes smile whenever he was talking to the sub guild master or to Miss Jo Hye-Jin. I could also remember how he greeted me with a smile when I first joined the guild.

‘He’s quiet… ’

It seemed he had a habit of staying quiet whenever he was furious. Since he hadn’t said a word for two days now, he wasn’t just angry. In fact, I had been seeing many

different sides of him recently.

“I’m sorry. I apologize once again,” Elias apologized.

“…”

“I don’t know what else to say,” he added.

“…”

To make things worse, the guild master wasn’t even talking to the leader of the elf party, so one could easily deduce the guild master’s fury, but it was understandable. It was difficult to blame someone for the accident, but if we had to put the blame on someone, the elves protecting the rickshaw were at fault. It was their fault for drawing their swords and ignoring the order to stay back. Even worse, they probably made a move for the sake of their useless pride.

‘Idiots.’

The situation was different, but it reminded me of myself a long time ago. When the sub guild master’s soul started weakening at a faster rate, the other elves, aside from Elias, were ordered to guard the rear so that the expedition could clear the dungeon smoother. Since the elves ended up in a situation where they could only watch the fight, they probably wanted to show us that they could fight as well. The problem was that the opponent was the dungeon’s named monster. It emerged from the ground and swallowed the rickshaw. In addition, no one really expected that the monster would directly retreat after doing that.

Miss Jo Hye-Jin approached Elias, the leader of the elf party, and said, “The guild master is currently… grieving. I don’t think he’s in the mood to discuss the expedition. If it’s something important or it’s related to the expedition, I’ll either deliver the information to him or come to an agreement with you as long as it’s within my power to do so.”

“I’m sorry,” Elias said.

“As I’ve said before, this isn’t something you need to apologize for, Mr. Elias. And Princess Elena is with the sub guild master as well. So rather than repenting about what happened in the past, we should hurry and chase after the named monster. We’ll keep the break time to a minimum, and we’ll charge as fast as possible with the

guild master's lead," she continued.

"Then from now on—"

"You should continue to provide meals to everyone with the supplies we have, but we will have to reduce our sleep time since we're in a hurry," she replied.

"Understood," Elias answered.

'I'm sure they're alive.'

It would be different for the others, but it was difficult to imagine the sub guild master dying in a place like that. I was sure he was alive…

'There's no way someone like him would die just like that.'

He couldn't just die like that. After all, if something truly happened to him, the person mumbling something under her breath wouldn't just stand still. Just looking at her was enough to send shivers down my spine. I tried to look elsewhere because my legs kept shaking, so I made sure to minimize the trembling of my legs.

Miss Jung Ha-Yan's head was drooped, but anyone could tell that there was something wrong with her. She was crying, but she was frowning as if she was feeling uncomfortable. If something really *did* happen to the sub guild master, the arrows of rage she had been holding in could fly toward the many people here, so the sub guild master couldn't die.

I looked at Miss Jung Ha-Yan and noticed that she was looking at the elves with a cold look. The look on her face made me recall the events back then, which made me cower in fear.

* * *

"I[2] love her."

'Of course, I love her.'

I knew I was the type to make dumb decisions sometimes, but if I were asked whether I liked Jung Ha-Yan or not, I would say that I liked her. I felt guilty that I wasn't able to protect her from the masked scum in her past life, and I also felt kind

of responsible for her in this life. I also liked the fact that she cared a lot about me, and I was starting to find her cute, thanks to her recent behavior.

'This is basically love.'

Naturally, I started acting to make my words sound believable because I already knew why Elena asked me that question. Elena probably knew the answer already. If she had seen what happened through the goddess' mirror, she could tell that Jung Ha-Yan and I didn't have a brother-and-sister relationship. She probably wanted to hear the answer from me directly.

'It's obvious.'

"I-I see. As expected…" Elana muttered.

"We were in the same situation when we first met. We weren't alone back then like we are right now, but we coincidentally met in a dungeon," I continued.

"*Ah*…"

Elena's face turned serious. She had probably never learned how to control her facial expression. Seeing her ears quiver was proof of that. I wasn't sure how fond she was of me, but the fact that she asked that question told me that she was starting to open up. I couldn't imagine just how complicated her thoughts were. I had thrown a lot of bait out, but whether she would bite it or not was up to her.

The fact that this was apparently a part of divine guidance played a big part. Recalling how much Elena was struggling to fulfill her divine guidance made me feel guilty, but there was no use crying over spilled milk. I was also having a difficult time maintaining the 'I don't know why you're asking that' face.

'Acting isn't easy.'

However, I was born to act. I spoke once again, and I saw her slowly looking at me with trembling ears.

"I'm thankful, and I feel bad that she's always beside me despite the fact that I'm lacking. We've been together since that day, but I haven't done much for her. It's actually the other way around. *Haha*," I laughed.

“I see…” Elena commented.

“She’s really cute when she smiles, and she gets mad sometimes, but even then—”

“Yes, M-Miss Jung Ha-Yan is very… beautiful. Her soul is overflowing with love,” she interrupted.

“I’m not sure if it’s the case, but I would sometimes have this thought…” I started.

“What?”

“…That it might be destiny. Have you had that kind of thought, Miss Elena?” I asked.

“What kind of thought do you mean exactly?” she questioned.

“That the gods have already decided our destiny,” I replied.

“O-Of course. I received divine guidance…”

“*Haha*. What I’m talking about is different from the grandiose story you’re referring to, Miss Elena. It could be similar, but it’s completely different from what you’re thinking. It seems trivial, but… if you think about how many foreigners and natives live on the continent…” I trailed off.

“Yes?”

“Regarding the destiny between people, when it comes to Ha-Yan and me, this is what I believe: I’m sure it’s not a coincidence that out of the many people on this continent, we happened to meet and established a great relationship,” I continued.

“…”

“Where I’m from, people say this often: people are connected by a red thread of fate. I’m sure she and I are connected as well,” I added.

“I see…”

Elena’s expression suddenly became even more serious. I wasn’t sure how to describe her expression, but she looked as if she was feeling guilty. It was an expression I had never seen before on her.

'Can I consider this a success?'

Elena spoke cautiously, "B-But… I-I mean, it's possible…"

"Yes?"

"But the problem is that… I believe you need to think about it more carefully. The g-god's will isn't something you can interpret so easily," she continued.

"*Ah*, my apologies, Miss Elena. My apologies if I said something rude… If it's a sensitive topic, then I'm very sorry. I don't know much about Elune's doctrine," I apologized.

"No! That's not it, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. That's not the case. That's not what I meant… I'm not saying that it's different from Elune's doctrine… O-Of course! It's not that I don't trust the relationship between you and Miss Jung Ha-Yan, but I'm just worried that it might make you interpret god's will differently…" Elena stuttered.

I was sure that she was distorting god's will more than me.

"*Ah*, I see," I commented.

"For me, I-I actually heard god's voice," she continued.

"Really?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm certain I heard it, and that's why I was able to tell you with certainty. B-But you're d-different from me, aren't you? As someone who spreads the will of the Goddess of Benigoa, I believe you should think more cautiously when it comes to situations like this… I'm telling you this just in case. I-I'm sorry, I was too—If I was being arrogant…"

"It's fine, Miss Elena. You weren't being arrogant. Thank you for the advice, and you're right, Miss Elena. I was being thoughtless. When I recall the incidents that happened due to distorting god's will, I understand why you're worried," I told her.

"That's right! That's why I'm telling you this," she exclaimed.

She still looked serious, and despite her ramblings, she was basically saying this…

‘My meeting with Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t destiny.’

She was beating around the bush, but I was certain that she wanted to tell me that. It was a pretty cute way of thinking. In my eyes, the way she tried to express her intentions looked cute, but at the same time, she was filled with indescribable guilt.

‘That’s it… ’

It was easy to be a scum. The first step was to recognize that one was a scum and endure the guilt. It didn’t matter whether one felt regret or guilt, the first step was always realizing it. Of course, it didn’t end there. There was another step, but it was a bit easier.

‘You end up justifying it.’

Humans and elves were the same. Intelligent animals would end up justifying their wrongdoings. Just like the innocent Princess Elena. The more they were unfamiliar with wrongdoings or negativity, they would end up justifying their actions even more.

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1. Han Sora’s POV ☜

2. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 360
ELUNE TRASH (1)

Of course, everything I was saying wasn't really correct. They were just my personal opinions because there wasn't a size that suited all. There were definitely people who accepted their bad behaviors and repented.

'The problem is I have never seen anyone do that… '

Elena wasn't showing a different side as I had expected, but every time she looked at me or showed that she was having many different thoughts, I knew it was somewhat affecting her, so naturally, I cheered and stood against her conscience.

'Stop enduring it. Just give up!'

Or…

'Just give up, Elena's conscience!'

These were the kind of cheers I had in mind. As the last person who had a conscience in the Everia Kingdom, she resisted a lot, but I was certain that her conscience was going to break down sooner or later. We just had to spend more time in this place and become even closer. Eventually, Elena would make a wise decision. Since that day, Elena started talking in a cautious way.

To be honest, she and I were complete opposites, so naturally, I started talking about Jung Ha-Yan. Of course, I didn't outright talk about destiny or divine guidance—the topics she was sensitive about—but I started a conversation similar to that, and I was sure she was very uncomfortable. I wasn't sure if it was because of what we had been talking about recently, but while we were exploring Salit's insides, Elena started to stick closer and closer to me.

To be honest, I thought that all the other preparations I had done had been rendered useless. Of course, Elena wasn't flirting with me or anything. It wasn't really appropriate to do something like that in our current situation, and Elena didn't have that kind of courage anyway. She was the type to wait for the other person to make

the move rather than her making the first move. Still, whether she wanted it or not, we were becoming even closer. Since we always held hands and did many things together, physical contact was inevitable. In the bad scenarios we had encountered so far, we had to stay together even when dealing with our *bodily functions.* I was actually fond of Elena, and she relied on me a lot. However, it was only natural to rely on each other in situations where surviving on our own was impossible. In some ways, our surroundings and situation created a romantic air between her and me.

Elena and I encountered more and more extreme situations and overcame more and more difficulties together, I kept on mentioning my relationship with Jung Ha-Yan, but Elena kept on downplaying our faithful relationship.

It hadn't even been a day since I brought up Jung Ha-Yan once again. However, instead of declining the negativity within her, she started accepting it and justifying her actions. I had no idea how she was justifying it, but I figured out the answer after thinking for a bit.

'It's inevitable.'

Or…

'This is the right path.'

Elena still looked guilty, but she improved quite a bit compared to when it all started. It was still kind of awkward, but in her two hundred years of life, this was the first time she started insulting other people. Obviously, she wasn't that good at insulting people, but it was cute in my eyes. As expected, I started hearing her breathing roughly next to me. I turned my head and saw an elf with a wicked heart. When I saw how her ears continuously twitched, I couldn't help but think that she was just getting started. For this woman, the location didn't matter anymore.

"Excuse me, Father Lee Ki-Young," Elena started.

"Yes, Miss Elena?" I replied.

"I-Is Miss Jung Ha-Yan a jealous person?" she asked.

The fact that she suddenly asked that kind of question meant that she wasn't good at insulting people. Seeing her awkward acting rendered me speechless and made me realize that acting sly was actually a skill. However, I decided to play dumb.

“It’s pretty serious. As I mentioned before, she doesn’t like me talking to other women at all. Of course, I find that side of her cute, but I’d be lying if I said that it doesn’t make me feel uncomfortable. I’m not really used to that kind of thing at all,” I answered.

“I-I see. As expected… y-your ideal type is an u-understanding woman and not overly jealous…” she stuttered with her ears twitching.

‘That’s Lee Ji-Hye… ’

“That’s not entirely true. If I were to choose, of course, I prefer a woman who’s very understanding, but since I often meet a lot of people, I can’t expect to meet only people of the same sex,” I explained.

“I see…”

“But why do you ask?” I questioned.

“I-It’s nothing. It’s just… I recalled my feelings when I encountered Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s soul,” she replied.

“But last time, you said her soul was full of love…” I pointed out.

“O-Of course, her soul is full of love, but there are things I haven’t told you. I’m not sure if saying that her soul isn’t the purest is the right description. It’s difficult for me to explain in detail, but I’m sure it’s something you’re unaware of,” Elena described.

‘I was right. I should become a fortune teller after all this.’

“Was Ha-Yan affected by the demon—”

“No, that’s not it. I-It’s more like her true nature…” she answered, interrupting me.

“I see. I had this thought since I first saw you, but it’s really amazing how you can feel another person’s soul. However, it could also be bad in some ways—ah! Are you able to distinguish which souls fit well with each other? Like—if the souls are suitable for each other or like they’re a match made in heaven,” I asked.

“Of course. I can’t say that it’s a hundred percent accurate, but I can somewhat deduce it,” she replied.

“Then is my soul compatible with Ha-Yan’s?” I questioned.

It was really amusing to see Elena thinking hard about my question. She looked like she was trying to cheer me up since we were in such a difficult situation. As such, my heart started to beat even faster in nervousness rather than feeling guilty. It was also funny how the innocent elf was trying to read my expression. Soon enough, I saw her close her eyes, and when she answered, I discovered that she had decided to ignore her conscience.

“I-It might disappoint you, but the compatibility between you two isn’t that great. To be exact, your souls aren’t suitable for each other.”

“*Ah*, is that right?” I asked.

“Yes… I’m certain of it,” she mumbled.

After committing a bad deed, Elena’s face turned dark. I was starting to become addicted to that kind of sight. She seemed as if she couldn’t hold in the urge to curse and was regretting the mistake she made. Obviously, it was my job to help her not feel any regret. I had to help her realize the joy of betraying her conscience rather than the pain of doing it. That way, she could take one step closer to becoming first-class trash.

“Excuse me for asking this, but how’s our compatibility?” I asked.

“What?”

“I’m sorry. I was being rude—”

“No, that’s not what I meant. I was just kind of surprised… I-I’ll answer your question,” Elena hurriedly replied.

“…”

“It’s embarrassing, but if I were to be blunt…” she trailed off.

“Yes?” I asked.

“Our souls are very compatible with each other. If you’re asking if we’re a match made in heaven, I would say that we are…” she muttered.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes, it’s true,” she added.

I had already forgotten how she vomited when we first met. *Ah*. It was fun to see her trying to take advantage of this situation, so it would be regrettable to let things end here. I was sure she also wanted to continue this conversation. After all, she needed an *ointment* on her heart being burned by guilt, and she probably needed water to quench her thirst as well.

“If what you said is true, then Elune’s divine guidance bestowed upon you could have a completely different meaning, *haha*.” I chuckled.

“*Huh?*”

“*Ah!* It’s nothing,” I hurriedly told her.

“…”

“We should get going. I’d like to stay for another day if possible, but we’re almost at the heart, so let’s hang on just a little bit longer,” I suggested.

“Father Lee Ki-Young, what you said earlier—” Elena mentioned.

“*Haha*, it’s really nothing. I just… said it because it suddenly popped into my mind, and it’s also because of the situation we’re in,” I explained, interrupting her.

“But—”

“I’ll tell you later,” I said, cutting her off once again.

I looked at her in a regretful way, and Elena looked more regretful than me. However, she didn’t continue the conversation. We could talk about it again, but we still had to escape this place as soon as possible.

“Okay…”

“We’ll probably reach the main organs by tomorrow, but this is under the assumption that my estimation is correct…” I told her.

“I’m sure you’re correct because we managed to arrive here without any issues. But if we reach the main organs…” Elena paused.

“I’m not sure if my potions or your holy power will have any effect, but it’s worth a try. The monster is probably weaker inside than on the outside. We don’t know when the expedition party will arrive, so we need to prepare ahead of time,” I explained.

“As expected… This is the reason you kept on studying alchemy,” she muttered.

“That’s right. Using the same method we have been using up until now may not work. I actually received a new power from the Goddess of Benigoa, but since I have been lying in bed, I haven’t been able to use it properly,” I replied.

“You also… received a calling.” she pointed out.

“I did.”

“I’m nothing but a mere alchemist, but I powered up a lot thanks to the goddess. The problem is that I have no idea how to use the power I was bestowed upon with…” I confessed.

“*Oh!* I may be able to help you with that,” she offered.

The first thought I had was, *‘how can you help me?’*

But when I saw her expression, I thought that perhaps she could really help me with it.

‘This… ’

It could really be possible.

‘This isn’t a gift, is it?’

I nodded after thinking about the divine guidance Elena had received. Elena could be a gift from Elune to me, and if my assumption was correct, then the situation was more interesting than I thought. I realized right there and then that Elune was more cold-hearted than I could have ever imagined.

‘Wow, that guy is a scum as well.’

I could have never imagined that he would give away his daughter just like that.

CHAPTER 361
ELUNE TRASH (2)

It made sense the more I thought about it. The divine guidance she was thinking about and what I had in mind was probably completely different, but I was sure her divine guidance was only related to my treatment. I couldn't even imagine the possibility that there was a connection between my job, the Alchemist of Light, and Elena.

'Of course, I couldn't. Who could have imagined it?'

Guardian of Elune was a legendary job, and Elena was the one and only high elf. I could probably use simple adjectives to describe her, but it had to be burdensome to have titles like high elf and apostle of god. It was even more true if we considered the fact that high elves were born under the influence of the magic coming from the World Tree. It made sense since the World Tree possessed mythical powers. In addition to keeping demons away from this nation, it was also protecting the Everia Kingdom. Elena was under the influence of the World Tree, and Elune had chosen her as well. As such, it wasn't strange that she had a legendary job. Elena was basically Elune's daughter as well as his alter ego. However, I could have never imagined that Elune, the creator, would just hand over his precious daughter to me.

'Who could have imagined that he was such a heartless piece of shit?'

I knew that even transcendent beings had flaws. However, I could have never imagined that Elune's way of thinking was similar to mine. Moreover, he could also stomach handing his daughter over to someone else. It wouldn't be enough to just call him a demon, I couldn't even help but feel bad for Elena at this point.

'Heartless scum.'

I was sure that trash like him was rare even up there, but it didn't matter what he was like. I actually wanted to give him a hug. As long as I would benefit, what would happen didn't matter because I would accept it wholeheartedly. I was sure that the transcendent being gave me a present so that I could be more useful to Kim Hyun-Sung. I had no idea what would happen afterward, but I was sure there was a reason

why they were fully supporting me. Anyway, one thing I figured out through all this was that there was more than one person managing the system. It was highly likely that the gods of this continent were looking down at us from above.

'So that scumbag Elune can influence the system as well.'

Of course, all this was just my imagination, but one thing I was sure of was that Kim Hyun-Sung and I were being protected by the figures up above. Since Elune was even handing his daughter over to me, it was only right for me to assume that he was showing his kindness.

'He might even help us out.'

I couldn't help but complain because of the bad situation, and based on the many situations I had encountered so far, the transcendent beings weren't allowed to interfere with the lives of humans as well as their life and death. I wasn't sure if it was *really* impossible, but it was undeniable that they would receive a huge penalty. Anyway, I was sure that the transcendent beings didn't want Kim Hyun-Sung and I to split up.

There was also a possibility that Elena was the catalyst the Alchemist of Light needed, and I couldn't help but suppress the urge to scream in delight at this assumption of mine.

I looked at Elena while smiling, and she looked at me with confusion. She flinched and quivered a bit, but she seemed to be in a good mood.

"Is there something you want to say?" Elena asked.

"I just recalled how you told me just now that you would help me," I replied.

"Yes, I will definitely help you. If it's something I can do, I'll do anything," she said.

"I'm not sure if you'll be okay with it since it's kind of difficult. It could also be a really rude thing to ask…" I warned.

"You don't have to worry. If it's something I can do… I'll do my best," she said.

Elena nodded without any suspicion. It was clear that she had no idea that I was about to ask her to be my test subject. However, her consent wasn't really that

important. If my assumption was correct, then it wasn't optional. I had to do it. Of course, it would be better if I gently coaxed her into it. After all, the quality of the research and the results would vary depending on her cooperation. I wasn't sure how this would make me look, but I decided to execute my plan right away.

At that, I grabbed her hand again, and Elena blushed as a result.

"I should examine your body, Miss Elena," I told her.

"What?" she asked.

I had no idea how, but it felt like time momentarily stopped. I knew I would have no choice but to explain when I saw her blushing face. I had already decided that I would only tell her the crucial parts, so the explanation wouldn't be that long. As such, I explained what I wanted to do. Elena nodded while I was explaining, and she even exclaimed a few times. It was impressive how she kept on nodding even though I was sure she had no idea what I was talking about. Still, one thing was for sure: she was happy that she and I had established a stronger connection with each other.

"I understand, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. But I don't quite understand how I can help…"

'That's the problem.'

I couldn't just do a blood test or tell her to take her clothes off right away. In addition, what could happen afterward could be an issue as well. I recalled how much time I spent researching Dialugia after discovering that she could be a catalyst, and I immediately knew that creating a new item in this place through research and alchemy was a ridiculous notion. The equipment on me wouldn't be enough. I managed to create the Dragon Breath Potion and the Enhancement Serum in a short period of time because I had hundreds of alchemist kits, and I had a lot of time up my sleeves back then as well.

'Shit… I'm not a genius.'

It was impossible to create results in a place where I basically had nothing. Scientists often needed decades to come up with a theory, and I also had no idea how many times I could conduct an experiment here. Elena was here, but I didn't have enough catalysts to protect her. I could probably protect her five times at most before exhausting all of my equipment.

I had to come up with a slightly different direction. Using Salit's body as a catalyst was impossible, and processing its saliva was impossible as well.

[Salit's Saliva - Semi-Mythic Rank]

[This material cannot be used as an alchemist's catalyst.]

I brought it with me just in case, but there had to be some kind of condition that had to be fulfilled before materials from a Semi Mythic monster could be used as a catalyst. Similar to how the Alchemist of Light could probably use the high elf Elena as a catalyst, I probably needed to obtain a specific job before I could use Salit as a catalyst.

'Should I just change my job?'

Naturally, I had no idea how to do that, and since Han Sora wasn't here, I had no idea how to start. However, Belial might react to my voice. I somewhat memorized the magic circle Han Sora had drawn back then. In addition, I was inside Salit's body, so I could definitely draw it here. Unfortunately, Elena was here with me.

'I can probably make her understand, but it's kind of a waste to get rid of the Alchemist of Light job… '

However, jobs were only useful if I was alive. There was a huge chance that I would die before we could come out of Salit's body. I couldn't just wait for Kim Hyun-Sung. I knew that transcendent beings couldn't interfere with our lives, but it would be too cruel for them to just abandon us like this.

'The more I think about it, the crueler they seem.'

All this time, I devoted my body and soul to the light, but all I got was a Semi Mythic job. I even started thinking about how many offerings I had made to the Goddess of Benigoa as the honorary cardinal. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that if I were second, no one would dare to claim first when it came to donations and offerings.

'Yeah, I'm sure of it.'

And what about what happened in Laios? There were some minor issues, but I couldn't even begin to describe just how great the impact that incident had on the world. The miracle I had made was broadcasted all over the continent, and the

followers of the Goddess of Benigoa drastically increased as a result. If the beings up above needed to show results similar to how demons needed to produce results through contracts, the impact I had on religion was indescribable.

[Rare Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[It was a deficit, you scumbag. It was a deficit. We're broke because we had to clean after your wicked deeds. Shit… It was a huge problem. (0/1)]

However, Light Ki-Young's achievements weren't just limited to Laios. I even made the Goddess of Benigoa the symbol of democrats, and it was one of Light Ki-Young's greatest achievements. In addition, hymns about the Goddess of Benigoa spread all over the continent thanks to the goddess' mirror.

[Rare Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[You're crazy, right? You call that an achievement? You have no idea what's going on here… (0/1)]

Those were only one of many things I had achieved. I had always been assisting Kim Hyun-Sung, and I also pledged my loyalty to him. I would even catch a grenade for him. But if the result of my loyalty were this cruelty, then it wouldn't be too bad to join Belial's side…

[Rare Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Getting involved in human affairs isn't allowed. Let's not do this. I understand how you're feeling, but if you… (0/1)]

I already feel betrayed, so what would happen afterward wasn't that important to me. A monster had already devoured me, so it shouldn't be so bad if I were to change my soul as well.

[Rare Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Look, Ki-Young. Let's not do this. I'm in a bad situation right now. I can't do anything. I've used so much holy power I even had to borrow holy power. I already borrowed a lot, so I really can't borrow any more. (0/1)]

I was on the brink of death. We only had five days worth of food, and my legs were swollen from all the walking. I thought I would enjoy glory and riches as long as I remained with Kim Hyun-Sung, but I didn't expect that I would end up on the verge of dying a cold and hungry death. If only I knew that the repayment for my belief and loyalty was hunger and death…

At this moment, I couldn't help but think about how the people who turned their backs on the goddess felt when they were about to relinquish their beliefs.

Of course, I wasn't really asking for a ridiculous request like being teleported out of here because I knew that such a thing was impossible. I had never heard of a transcendent being coming down from up above to resolve things for their devotee, so I definitely wasn't asking for that. However, shouldn't it be the responsibility of those with power to help the people under them walk on a path that was a bit more comfortable to walk on? If this transcendent being still couldn't understand what I meant, then I would never compromise anymore. They had to learn from that heartless scumbag, Elune.

'You hear me? I really won't compromise.'

[Rare Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Shitty Bastard (0/1)]

‘I have no… ’

[Semi-Mythic Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Raise your right hand (0/1)]

[Quest Completion Reward]

[Light Bomb Potion Recipe - Semi-Mythic Rank]

I had finally received an answer to my belief.

‘Praise the Goddess of Benigoa.’

I knew it. I knew the heavens wouldn’t abandon their devotees, and when my faith in the goddess increased, my heart became filled with light.

[Rare Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[You’re a real piece of shit. Seriously. (0/1)]

CHAPTER 362
ELUNE TRASH (3)

'Nice. Very nice.'

I knew if my good deeds piled up, I would naturally get rewarded with good things, and I smiled at the thought of it. Who would believe it if they were told that all they had to do to complete a Semi Mythic quest was to raise their hands? I was glad that it didn't tell me to prepare for battle. I raised my right hand with a determined look, and I heard an interesting noise that made me the happiest I had ever been.

[Semi-Mythic Rank Forced Quest has been completed.]

[Raise Right Hand (1/1)]

[Quest Completion Reward]

[Light Bomb Potion Recipe]

[High Elf's Tears Imbued with Holy Power (0/1), World Tree Leaf (0/1)]

[Semi-Mythic Rank - Alchemist of Light Exclusive Catalyst]

In addition to the defined rewards, I also saw a catalog of catalysts exclusively for the use of the Alchemist of Light. I had a few of them with me, but the two most important catalysts were missing. However, I deduced that Elena definitely had them with her. If not, then there was no way our goddess would give me a recipe for something when I lacked the ingredients for it. As such, I could only assume that she gave me a recipe for an item that I could create in our current situation.

'If I were by myself, I would never succeed.'

The recipe was really complicated since it included the World Tree Leaf as a material. In addition, there were many steps that I had to approach carefully, and the Light Bomb Potion wasn't something I could get an idea of how to create by haphazardly attempting to create it. After all, attempting for the sake of getting an idea of how to create it meant wasting precious materials and catalysts.

'It'll take a few years…

Even techniques I had never even heard of before were explained in detail. Using magic when dealing with magic circles or catalysts was the basics. Basically, it was like pouring oil, which was magic, into a car, which was alchemy. However, the esteemed Alchemist of Light's oil was holy power rather than magic, so the original recipe had to be tweaked.

'It turns out that I was right.'

It was kind of a different story, but I had never imagined that it would work out in the end. As such, I offered another prayer to express my gratitude. I made sure to do that because our lovely Goddess of Benigoa was always watching over us.

'This is it! This is what I'm talking about!'

I realized that my assumption was somewhat correct. This continent was being protected by several gods, and they used quests to deliver their thoughts to the people of the continent. Obviously, they weren't allowed to intervene too deeply, and they would receive a penalty for their wrongdoings. There was a huge chance that Altanus, the one who made Kim Hyun-Sung regress, received an unimaginable penalty as a result of their actions. Of course, the Goddess of Benigoa would receive a penalty for what they had done just now, but it was none of my business. After all, I just had to enjoy the ride.

Elena saw the smile on my face, and she looked at me curiously. At that, I started talking because sharing good news always made me feel good.

"I received divine guidance."

No sentence was more appropriate and beautiful than that, and it couldn't be more relieving than any other sentence.

"What?" Elena asked.

“I’ll explain it while walking. I need high elf tears imbued with holy power and a World Tree Leaf. Do you happen to have…” I trailed off.

“The elves of the Everia Kingdom all carry around a World Tree Leaf with them, but it doesn’t really have any effects…” she replied.

“If your tears are used on it, it should change into a catalyst I can use,” I told her.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young, I think I know what you’re talking about, but it’s difficult for me to do that because this is so sudden. If you can explain the situation slowly…” she requested.

“I’ll explain later. One thing I’m sure of is that I received divine guidance from the Goddess of Benigoa. I think I know why you and I met. I’m sure of it,” I answered.

The relationship between a material procurement worker and the CEO. Hassan and the CEO.[1] Of course, I couldn’t tell her that, and I also couldn’t tell her that the heartless scumbag Elune had sold her off. I decided to speak sweet words to her because I had to eventually deal with her anyway. Obviously, I didn’t tell her anything important.

“W-What kind…” Elena asked.

“You’re someone… I really need…” I muttered.

“I see…” she mumbled.

“Actually, it’s nothing,” I said.

“…”

People would surely desire a sweet fruit more if it were so close to them that they could almost taste it. I didn’t say anything and just looked at her. However, it seemed that Elena had an idea about what I was trying to say. I grabbed her hands, and when I looked at her again with desire, the easy elf blushed. I was sure she realized that I was having a difficult time moving forward, and she was probably thinking…

‘Ah, he finally noticed. No, he’s still processing it… ’

Elena was definitely nervous because her ears started quivering. However, she soon

took on a strange expression.

'Was it because of the sense of achievement, or was it because of the thrill of doing something immoral?'

Perhaps it was both. Elena seemed guilty, but her body started trembling out of joy. More than that, she seemed happy about the fact that I wanted her and was probably thinking that she had bested Jung Ha-Yan. I wasn't sure if Elena felt that she was becoming an adulteress stealing someone else's husband, but it wouldn't be strange if she thought of it. As long as she knew that she was doing something bad, everything else didn't really matter.

She was definitely thinking that she had bested Jung Ha-Yan, and I finally realized it. It was still too early for me to celebrate, but the atmosphere was good enough for me to hammer the nail in the coffin. We had a lot of time courtesy of our Goddess of Benigoa, so I thought it would be fine if we did something else for a bit. It honestly felt like we were out camping when I saw how she wasn't as anxious about our situation anymore.

'It wouldn't hurt to be trapped with her one more time.'

I felt her slowly pulling my arm. I flinched. Elena looked at me as if she was telling me to look at her, and I found it cute when she pulled herself closer to me. I had to show that I was *hesitant*, so when I took a step back, she stepped forward.

"Y-You've realized it," Elena stuttered.

"…"

"I-I already knew it. Actually, I've known for a long time, but I-I pretended not to know. Of course, I'm not entirely sure, but I-I know everything now," she continued.

"…"

"I know that you have someone you love, but…" she paused.

"It's a bit sudden, but… regarding what I said just now, that's not what I meant, Miss Elena," I told her.

"No, I-I'm sure you already know, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I'm sure of it," she insisted.

'Look at her go… '

Elena seemed determined, and it was funny to see her legs and ears shaking. I was sure the sweet fruit hanging from the tree had captivated her since she was saying all this despite her nervousness.

"I'm sure you already know, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. T-The reason why you're unable to take a step forward right now is that you're feeling guilty. I-It's because you're too nice," she added.

'Yeah, I am nice.'

"You told me before about how people are connected by a red thread. At the time, you said you were connected to Miss Jung Ha-Yan, but I realized that it's not. I'm sure of it. Please look at me, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Your f-fated partner isn't… Miss Jung Ha-Yan, so please…" she stopped.

She got to the point where she was encouraging me rather than the opposite.

"It's not something we should be discussing here, and we don't have time for this, Miss Elena. You seem to be a bit worked up as well. If you calm yourself down a little, maybe—"

"No, I'm telling you this because we're in this place and in this current situation. Don't avoid my eyes. Look at me," she interrupted.

Elena looked like she was about to cry. I wanted to catch her tears, but I obviously couldn't do that right now.

"Please look at me, and don't hide your feelings. Tell me honestly how you feel," she requested.

"But…"

"I know you're feeling guilty. But, but…" she stuttered.

"…"

"Please hold me," Elena said.

"…"

"Hold me," she repeated.

Elena had to be extremely desperate because she started crying, and she seemed like she was praying while looking at the hanging fruit that seemed like it was about to fall anytime soon. I had never imagined that she would be this aggressive to me, so I was sure that this was a *really* impulsive decision even for her. If she had enough time to think about this, then she wouldn't behave like this. As such, she had to be more desperate than I could imagine. She looked like she was desperate to catch the sweet fruit that was on the verge of falling from the tree with her mouth. Of course, I knew that it definitely took her a lot of courage to do this because Elena was a passive person. It was only recently that she became a bit more proactive, but she had always been passive. After all, she had been staying within the confines of the Everia Kingdom for the past two hundred years. The fact that she could talk like this meant that scumbag Elune was pushing her to say these things. God's words and divine guidance were pretty useful in many things, and the situation this time was pretty special as well.

'It looks like she's not even worried about the chance that the fruit is poisoned.'

Elena's ears quivered as she approached me and carried her lips closer to mine. Obviously, I pretended like I was rejecting her, but I wasn't really rejecting her, so our lips quickly met.

[Hero Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[The Hero Ranked Forced Quest has been canceled due to an unknown reason.]

The uninvited visitor made me flinch, but what happened afterward was pretty obvious. Elena definitely caught on to the fact that the fruit she desired for so long wasn't as sweet as she thought. Time passed, and while I was asleep, Elena's sobs reverberated vividly because we were still inside a monster. I wasn't really worried about her because I knew that she would simply justify her actions on her own. She would definitely think that there was nothing else she could have done about it.

[Legendary Ranked Forced Quest has been activated.]

[The Legendary Ranked Forced Quest has been canceled due to an unknown reason.]

Perhaps it was just me, but for some reason, I felt like I could hear someone else's cries as well.

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1. This is a reference to a Korean comic about foreigners working in Korea and how they were harassed by their managers. ☜

CHAPTER 363
LIGHT KI-YOUNG SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT (1)

The next day, I felt really refreshed. Obviously, the sickening monster smell was still there, but I felt refreshed because I woke up to great news.

“This is the item you mentioned, but I’m not sure if this is the right one…” Elena said.

“I’m sure it is, Miss Elena. I can’t thank you enough,” I told her.

“It’s nothing. It’s my duty, after all,” she said.

[Semi-Mythic Rank - Alchemist of Light Exclusive Catalyst]

[High Elf Tears Imbued With Holy Power]

[Semi-Mythic Rank - Alchemist of Light Exclusive Catalyst]

[World Tree Leaf]

‘My precious… ’

My hand started shaking when I saw the shiny objects.

‘My precious!’

I felt happy because these priceless materials were just for me. A small amount of liquid was contained in a small potion bottle along with a small leaf. When I imagined the influence these catalysts would have on the world, I couldn’t help but laugh. I wanted to get up and dance right now, but I couldn’t do that because the elf

in front of me didn't seem happy.

I had a feeling about it when I heard her crying last night, but she had to have thought about many things. In the end, she definitely thought that she had to prepare these items for me, despite feeling guilty all night, so I was very proud of her for that.

I looked at her face and noticed that it was swollen. I thought she would be okay, but she seemed to be struggling. Her ears were drooping, and there was guilt all over her face. People like Elena were kind by nature. She had never lied before, and she made a wrong decision after being unable to overcome her sudden desire. From my perspective and standards, it was a small issue, but for her, I was sure she was having an unimaginably difficult time rationalizing what he had done. She was feeling guilty and immoral at the same time, but putting a full stop to all this wouldn't make her feel good.

'How could he… '

I couldn't help but blame the cold-hearted Elune again. There was no use crying over spilled milk. This heartbroken elf had been abandoned by the god she believed in, so helping her before she reached the point of no return and salvation was the right thing to do. After all, I needed her to stay by my side in the future.

I grabbed her hand, and she flinched. It was amusing how she instinctively tried to avoid my hand. However, she ended up letting me grab her hand because the thrilling pleasure her immoral actions were making her feel overshadowed her guilt. Talking with me or staying next to me would probably keep her stable.

"About yesterday…" I started.

"I'm… sorry," Elena apologized.

"No, you shouldn't apologize. I felt the same way, and I believe it was needed," I said.

"*Ah*…" she commented.

"I do feel kind of refreshed… Of course, I'm not sure if you could consider that as a treatment, but I feel different from before. What do you think of me, Miss Elena?" I asked.

"Now that I think about it…" she started.

“Yes?”

“So that’s it. T-That’s what happened,” she stuttered.

‘That’s right. You’re right.’

I was sure she didn’t feel like she was vomiting while around me anymore. She didn’t really change completely, but at least she didn’t feel like vomiting around me anymore. It was proof that her nature was changing bit by bit, and it also meant that I had already been engraved in Elena’s heart. I wasn’t sure exactly how big was the space I was occupying in her heart, but if I let go of her hand right now, she might choose to do something drastic. The reason she was able to endure the guilt boring down on her was my existence. If my existence—which was basically a large shield protecting her from the guilt—disappeared, then I could already deduce what she would do. She might make the same choice Jung Ha-Yan made in her first life upon being humiliated by the masked scum.

‘I can’t let that happen. Definitely not.’

I couldn’t let the goose that laid golden eggs—no, I couldn’t let the precious Elena become someone like Jung Ha-Yan in the Dark World. While nodding, I heard Elena talking to herself.

“I see. So it was unavoidable. To treat you… Yes, it was necessary…”

Elena seemed kind of out of it, so I grabbed her hand tightly. When I kissed her lightly, she didn’t reject it and was actually clinging to me a little. I backed away and saw that her face had turned red. I thought about how these kinds of moves were necessary for the next few days. It didn’t matter whether it was simply for curiosity or pleasure. It was more important that I stop her from having bad thoughts.

‘It can’t be helped.’

There were some ups and downs, but I thought my original plan was a success. There were some risks, but the risks weren’t enough for me to be worried about. I didn’t turn her into a dangerous person as I did with Jung Ha-Yan, and I compromised at reasonable points. She was *moderately* tainted. Despite the process, I was already carved in Elena’s heart. The most important part was that my tainted soul had been treated thanks to the pure connection I had established with high elf Elena. The next chapter was obvious. Now that I had been carved in Elena’s heart, I

had to charge toward this dirty monster's heart.

'You think you'll be able to digest me?'

Ridiculous. This dirty monster was making a huge mistake if it thought it could digest a soul enveloped by light.

"I think we should get going," I suggested.

"What about the item you're making…" Elena asked.

"I'm sure I'll have time here and there, and I can also prepare the catalyst while moving. I have it planned out in my head, so don't worry," I replied.

We immediately moved in case something happened. Elena looked confused, but the resumption of our journey brought her many surprises. For her, a catalyst being processed while moving had to be an interesting sight. Actually, alchemy itself could be interesting to her because the elves didn't really have that much knowledge about alchemy.

"It's interesting. I've seen it before, but…" Elena commented.

It was good that I managed to capture her interest because it prevented her from having bad thoughts.

"Did you… memorize the methods and the order to make this catalyst?" she asked.

"Yes, and I'm already used to making catalysts. It'll probably be ready in a few hours. Afterward, I'll use my alchemy kit and create a potion," I replied.

Of course, there was some difficulty with it, but the potion was a piece of cake because I was making it with a cheat sheet. Naturally, I felt like a genius because my measurement and alchemy sense was perfect. I was creating it with a cheat sheet, but Elena was looking at me as if she was watching something amazing, and I was certain she saw the light of the Goddess of Benigoa in me from time to time.

'The effect is great.'

Every time I used my magic, a brilliant gold light would emit from me because my magic contained holy power. The amount of holy power I had at my disposal wasn't

that much, but whenever I used magic and holy power on the catalyst, holiness would be poured into it as well.

'This is the energy of the light. Indeed.'

It felt like it had been a while since I did some serious alchemy work, and even while taking a break, I continued to experiment while reading the cheat sheet. Lights would sometimes flash, and a sound I couldn't really describe could be heard sometimes. I didn't even know what those noises were because I was only doing what I was told, but one thing I was sure of was that I was displaying an amazing miracle. The potion was about to be completed, but I suddenly felt the monster moving.

'Huh?'

I wasn't imagining it because Elena had the same expression as me. Of course, I wasn't really surprised because this kind of movement had happened a few times while we were inside this monster. All I could recall was the monster tossing and turning, but the shock that reverberated throughout the monster once again made me realize that something was wrong.

"M-Mr. Lee Ki-Young," Elena called out.

"I can feel it as well. I think we should pick up our pace while holding each other's hands so that we won't fall and get separated," I suggested.

"Okay."

If we fell and end up where we started, all of this would be in vain. We would be forced to start our journey all over again.

'What's going on?'

The monster's insides shook once again. I immediately created a magic circle, and a shield was created with a snap of my fingers. I could feel that the shaking wasn't a simple trembling because it made us roll back and forth.

'This is… '

It felt as if the monster was fighting against something or someone. I hugged Elena

tightly with one arm, and she grabbed onto me with her eyes closed.

'Is it Hyun-Sung?!'

The noises were loud, and the monster was shaking a lot. Naturally, I thought of the expedition team.

'They're here.'

The Blue Guild and Elune Knights were here.

"What's… going on, Mr. Lee Ki-Young?" Elena asked.

"I think the expedition team is here. I don't know what's going on, but I'm sure that's the case," I replied.

It seemed the expedition team arrived here about three days earlier than originally planned. However, it made sense under the assumption that the expedition team moved urgently.

"Then what…"

"We still have to do what we have to do. The expedition team is definitely having a hard time. If we helped them, then they can defeat this named monster a lot easier," I replied.

"Alright."

"For now, I think it's best if you stay in my arms. We may bump into each other, so be careful," I warned her.

"Got it," she replied.

Elena blushed, but I didn't pay too much attention to it.

'Even in this situation… '

I had to take care of the issue in front of us. I didn't know what was going on outside, but as I mentioned just now, the expedition team had a hard fight ahead of them. After all, the monster was a Semi-Mythic named monster. Even if the Blue Guild had

Kim Hyun-Ah and Jung Ha-Yan, they would probably have to make some sacrifices while fighting, and I was sure that they would get physically tired. Since they arrived here about three days earlier than originally planned, the rearguard would probably reach their limits sooner or later.

I had many complicated thoughts, but my hands were moving fast, and I kept on infusing my holy power into the materials.

'Shit.'

I felt like I was about to go crazy. I had been using Dialugia's catalyst to stabilize my body while conducting experiments, and I was about to achieve results. Elena surrounded us with veils to stop the shockwaves from reaching me, and she looked at me anxiously. She looked like she was praying as well, and if that was the case, then she was definitely praying to that ruthless scum, Elune. However, her prayers were surprisingly effective. I softened the catalysts and poured my holy power over them, eliciting a burst of blinding light.

'Nice!'

CHAPTER 364
LIGHT KI-YOUNG SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT (2)

The light inside the bottle was spinning furiously, and the light it emitted was so strong I couldn't even open my eyes properly. Unlike my expectation that I would immediately hear something nice, my experiment continued to emit light, which made me feel anxious.

'I hope Benigoa didn't trick me… '

I started getting worried that the bottle might suddenly explode.

As a devout follower of the respectable Goddess of Benigoa and a proud ally of Kim Hyun-Ah, it was hard to imagine the goddess abandoning me, but that didn't mean I wasn't worried at all. I was worried because I knew that out of the many managers of the system, I knew at least one scumbag—Elune.

'No. At least our Goddess of Benigoa isn't as big of scum as Elune.'

Since she had already sacrificed many things for me, I was sure she wouldn't backstab her loyal believer.

I decided to pour a little more holy power, and although I was worried, I didn't think it would suddenly blow up.

"Miss Elena, holy power," I started.

"What?" Elena asked.

"Please continue pouring holy power into this. I'm sure it'll be effective," I requested.

"Got it. Leave it to me," she said.

No further explanation was needed. Elena immediately nodded and poured holy

power into the bottle as if she had received a golden egg. Obviously, I didn't toss this task to her because I was afraid of it blowing up. It was all because her holy power was more powerful than mine. I thought the bottle needed more, so I joined her and light emitted from the bottle again. I did get scared whenever the monster moved violently from time to time, but in the end, I started to hear noises I wanted to hear.

'I was right. Praise the Goddess of Benigoa!'

[Successfully created the Semi-Mythic potion, Light Bomb Potion.]

[Magic has been increased by 1 point.]

[Light Bomb Potion - Semi-Mythic Rank]

[Alchemist of Light Exclusive Consumable Item - Daily Usage Limit (0/3)]

[This potion can only be created by the Alchemist of Light. This potion was made thanks to the Goddess of Benigoa's consideration and Elena's sacrifice. Once holy power is poured into the bottle, it identifies and differentiates allies and hostiles, causing a huge explosion of light. It instantly heals allies while revealing the location of hostile units. This potion can be used up to three times each day. P.S. You piece of shit. This is really the last time. I can't help you anymore.]

'Nice! Nice! Awesome!'

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young, I think it's ready. We did it. We really did it!" Elena yelled.

"Yes, I saw it as well, Miss Elena," I said.

"I-Is this really… An item like this…" she said.

"It's all thanks to you, Miss Elena," I told her.

"No, this is the result you achieved. This holy crystal enveloped by pure light is your

great work. You're really amazing. Really…" she complimented.

"I'm flattered, but I wouldn't have been able to create an item like this if it weren't for you," I said.

I wanted to scream as well, but I couldn't really express my joy, considering our current situation. If I could, I would have grabbed Elena's hand and danced with her, but all I could do was place the potion in my pocket. I wanted to examine the brilliant potion a bit longer, but I didn't have the luxury to do that.

I recalled the potion's durability, and it surely wouldn't break from a small shock, but it wouldn't hurt to be cautious. It should be safe in the Infinity Bag Kim Hyun-Sung gave me as a present. I placed it in the bag and started moving.

Elena grabbed me and nodded.

'She looks happy.'

Unimaginable excitement was depicted on her face, and she looked as if she had obtained the world. She was even looking at me in admiration.

'It's understandable.'

The potion was a Semi-Mythic item, but it was no different from mythic because this item had never existed before on the continent. I wasn't sure how powerful it was, but I was sure that it was stronger than I could ever expect. In addition, it instantly healed the wounds of my allies. It didn't seem much, but it could be stronger than the healing power of a high priest. However, the downside was that I could only use it three times a day. I wasn't sure whether Benigoa was the one who set the limit or if it was because it was a new item, but it didn't matter that much to me.

'It could even identify and differentiate allies and hostiles.'

This item was worth screaming for.

'Let's gooo! Praise the Goddess of Benigoa!'

Now that I had overcome the most difficult mission, the next step was going to be a piece of cake. Once we arrived at the monster's heart, I just had to throw the potion in my pocket at it, and everything would be resolved. The expedition party and I

would all be happy.

My tainted soul had already been treated, and everyone's jaw would definitely drop once they Light Ki-Young's power after being purified. We were currently in a difficult situation, but I couldn't stop smiling while imagining the wonderful results.

Obviously, we were having a hard time walking because the fight was still ongoing. Actually, I wasn't really sure whether they were actually fighting because there was a possibility that this monster just went rampant on its own. I wanted to take a look at what was going on outside, but it was disappointing because I couldn't do it.

'It'd be nice if I could tell them my situation here… '

The situation changed when we started running frantically. I felt a familiar magic, and if I wasn't imagining it, then this familiar energy belonged to *her.*

'Jung Ha-Yan?'

I smiled, and I was taken aback because Elena was still in my arms, but I was sure Jung Ha-Yan would understand that I had no choice. I was kind of worried, but I thought she would be more focused on my survival than the fact that Elena was in my arms.

I looked around slowly and saw a familiar eye.

'Anemone's Eye.'

The expedition party was definitely here.

The large eye was following me. I couldn't help but feel a shiver down my spine when it managed to locate me after breaking through Salit's magic resistance. Of course, the eye couldn't attack at all, so it was considered different from other spells, but I still couldn't help but be awed by the fact that Jung Ha-Yan could use such a spell. I looked at Anemone's Eye and nodded, and I felt it nodding back. It felt like the eye was here to confirm my location.

'I knew it.'

It was safe to assume that it couldn't confirm my survival all this time because I was too far away. It was just an assumption, but I had a feeling that the reason Anemone's

Eye managed to find me this time was thanks to the expedition party.

'I was right about a battle happening as well.'

They had to be worried about me even while fighting. I wanted to tell Jung Ha-Yan to focus on the battle rather than wasting her mana here, but I thought that it was good that Anemone's Eye was here because I could deliver messages outside.

"Tie it up as tight as you can. I'm going to run toward the heart," I ordered.

"What?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"And focus out there, not here," I added.

I was sure Jung Ha-Yan heard me, but Anemone's Eye was still following me. I waved while looking at it, and it sent a burst of magic as if it understood what I was saying.

'Nice.'

I wasn't sure about the progress of the battle outside, but my message was delivered, and I was sure they finally knew that Elena and I were also being affected by the shockwaves of the battle. Unfortunately, the enemy was too strong for them to hold back while thinking about us. I wasn't sure about the monster's endurance stat, but aside from Jung Ha-Yan and Kim Hyun-Sung's attack, there was a high chance that the attacks of the others weren't working on the monster. Well, they could probably hurt it, but those attacks would be shallow. In addition, the monster was huge, so there was probably a limit to how much Kim Hyun-Ah's sword could do. If they could easily finish the monster off, Salit would have died long ago.

'I have to help them.'

It definitely wasn't because I wanted to deal the killing blow.

'Nice… '

Jung Ha-Yan definitely heard me because the shockwaves had considerably lessened. It felt like they were suppressing its movements, and it seemed like they weren't using magic that caused shockwaves. What they had done made it easier for me to move.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young, is the…” Elena suddenly said.

“Yes, I think the expedition party knows our location now. I’m sure they’ll give a signal soon,” I told her.

“I see. That’s a relief… really,” she commented.

“I think Ha-Yan found me. Seeing that the tempo of the battle has changed, I think the party outside is trying to help us,” I added.

“That’s… good,” she muttered.

“Let’s move even faster. I’m sure they’ll send a sign within a few minutes,” I suggested.

“Okay!”

All of a sudden, a strong shock ran through me. I flinched just a bit, but I wasn’t really surprised because I felt something suppressing the monster from above. I could feel that the monster was resisting, but it seemed to have been forced into a corner. Its insides were shaking, but the path I had to take was still the same.

‘I don’t have much time.’

I had no idea if it was because I wanted to land the killing blow or if I just wanted to ensure that the expedition party wouldn’t be in danger, but an unknown energy started to overflow within me. For some reason, I recalled the hardships I went through these past few days, and I couldn’t help but express my gratitude to Salit. After all, if it weren’t for Salit, I wouldn’t have obtained so many things. The darkness had always been bad because it always wanted to swallow the light, and unfortunately, it was time for me to part ways with Salit.

[Salit’s Heart]

A system message told me that I had reached my destination. It was overwhelming to see the huge heart furiously pumping blood, but I didn’t want to just stare at it because I wanted to get out of this place as soon as possible. Honestly, I wanted to vent all the pent-up stress I had accumulated over these few days, so I instantly reached into the Infinity Bag.

'You think you can eat me?'

I was sure that Light Ki-Young's light energy was too much for the monster to digest. Naturally, I poured my mana into the new Light Bomb Potion. The bottle soon left my hand, and a brilliant light gradually started to burst with the potion at the center.

"Shit…"

It was an indescribable light, and I was disappointed that I couldn't record this scene. I shouted unknowingly. Even though it was a famous line known all around the world, I wanted to shout it out at least once.

"Let there be light!"

Light Ki-Young said let there be light…

'And there was light.'

That was basically what happened…

[You achieved an unattainable achievement.]

[A new title has been created.]

CHAPTER 365
LIGHT KI-YOUNG SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT (3)

'Are they really alive… '

I[1] know questioning their survival was bad, but I couldn't help but feel anxious. It was because I saw the unimaginably large monster swallow the entire carriage. No matter how much I thought about it, it was the fault of the Elune Knights. I couldn't blame it on the humans who came with us. I felt bitter because I realized that the Elune Knights were really weak compared to the humans, especially when it came to intelligence. The humans had analyzed the situation better than the Elune Knights. In addition, the humans were always calm and modest, unlike the Elune Knights. What I meant by modest was that they weren't arrogant if the enemy was stronger than them. Even if the humans here and the elves had the same basic stats, the difference between the two shouldn't be that huge.

'No, it's not just the Elune Knights.'

It was the same for me as well.

'I was close enough to protect them.'

I froze at the monster's overwhelming size. It was a monster I had never seen before, and even now, my legs would still shake whenever I recalled the monster. I was sure it was the same for the other elves. Despite that, those in front of me seemed like they weren't worried about this new type of monster and were only interested in whether Lee Ki-Young was alive or not. They didn't seem worried about the monster's size and strength as they walked. The incident caused made the human mage lose her mind, and the Guild Master of the Blue Guild went completely quiet while the tiny assassin and the spear-wielding woman warrior were cautiously looking at her. Even the warrior with the large shield was looking at the human mage, but it was really interesting how they didn't seem scared of the monster.

'I'm sure they trust her… '

They were believing in their guild master, who was walking quietly while holding a sword bigger than her. Honestly, the way she had been fighting so far was unrealistic and surreal. She moved so fast it was difficult to follow her with my eyes, and every time she swung her sword, the large demons would fall like leaves. It was as if she was showing with her entire body how strong a person could be with a sword. However, it didn't mean there weren't any risks. The expedition party was strong, and I was sure there wasn't a monster on this continent they couldn't fight and defeat, but it ultimately depended on their opponent. I came up with various situations in my head, but I wasn't sure whether this monster of a sword-wielder could defeat that monster. Even if we went in prepared, I still had no idea which side would win. In the end, I couldn't help but shake my head when I recalled how physically exhausted we were.

'Is this pace okay?'

Everyone knew that the party members were already at their limits, yet they were still moving. They were walking through this difficult area while fighting many demons, so it was difficult to imagine fighting the boss monster in our current condition.

"Mr. Elias, is it really okay to keep going like this?"

While I was deep in my thoughts, I heard someone speak and saw a worried Elune Knight.

"I'm worried that we may be pushing it a little. Of course… I understand how they're feeling, but in our current state, we'll lose before we even start the fight," he continued.

"I know," I said.

"Maybe we should ask for outside support… or consider other ways," he added.

"…"

The elf who asked the question was filled with fear, and I smiled bitterly because I could feel the fear in his voice. He had to have realized the meaning behind my smile because he became flustered, but he wasn't wrong. Our opponent was an unrivaled monster, so fighting against a named monster while exhausted was basically suicide.

I looked around slowly and saw Jo Hye-Jin. I walked toward her to address the issue.

“Miss Jo Hye-Jin,” I called out.

“I’m glad you’re here, Mr. Elias. The guild master said we’re near the end of the dungeon, and she said it’s probably best if the tired elves rest. It won’t be for a long time, but I think we can recover our strength here,” she said.

“Then, the main party…” I mentioned.

“She said the main party will continue the expedition. Han Sora, Kim Chang-Ryeol, and Yoo Ah-Young of the Blue Guild will remain here and prepare for unexpected situations. She said we’ll clear the path, and she asked me to tell you that you should take care of things once we were done,” she replied.

‘Is she being serious?’

She didn’t seem like she was joking because I noticed a few people preparing to leave. The mage who was still crying got up and was already prepared to leave, and the others were the same. I was once again reminded of just how important Lee Ki-Young was to them. Obviously, I was the same because I couldn’t imagine losing Elena.

In the end, I unknowingly spoke out loud.

“I’ll go as well.”

“…”

“I’m sure I can be helpful. No, I want to go. Out of the knights, I’m probably the least exhausted, and although I may be lacking, I’ll do my best to be helpful,” I told her.

“No, it’s fine, Mr. Elias. We actually wanted to ask you to join us, so we’re grateful that you volunteered…” she said.

“No need to thank me. I’m only doing what’s right,” I said.

“Then let’s go…”

“Alright.”

Naturally, I checked the condition of my weapon. I volunteered to get rid of my anxiety, and interestingly, I felt that it was working. Of course, my body was still shaking, but this incident was worth the risk. Seeing the fearless humans made me more certain about my thoughts earlier.

The expedition party started to pick up the pace, and I knew it…

'We're at the end.'

The further we went in, the stronger the pressure around us became. I tried not to be bothered by it, but I was unconsciously resisting the pressure. The others looked even more determined, and Kim Hyun-Ah finally spoke. She spoke just as I was finding it hard to breathe.

"Deep breaths."

"Alright."

"Let's get ready to go in," she said.

"Okay."

"Protecting Miss Jung Ha-Yan and Miss Sun Hee-Young will be our top priority. Miss Hye-Jin and Ye-Ri should focus on protecting the rear. I want Miss Jung-Yeon to support Miss Ha-Yan as much as possible, and it will be difficult, but I would like Mr. Ahn Ki-Mo to be in charge of healing the entire party," Kim Hyun-Ah ordered.

"By myself, Guild Master?" Ahn Ki-Mo asked.

"Yes. However, I recommend using your holy power for damage buffs. It will be difficult at the front, but Mr. Deok-Gu, I want you to please try and endure it using your potions," she added.

"Got it," Park Deok-Gu answered.

"If I believe it's getting dangerous, I'll make sure that we can retreat. I'll also be the last one to leave rather than Mr. Deok-Gu. And…" she paused.

"Yes?"

“I think it would be best if you manage the key members of the battle, Mr. Elias. I’m sure you’ll be more effective at that because the power you possess and the power of the enemy are polar opposites. I know you’re scared. It’s a natural thing, and it’s nothing to be embarrassed about. If you keep in mind that I’m watching out for you, it’ll make it easier for you to move,” she continued.

“Thank you for the advice,” I said.

She nodded quietly.

“Let’s go,” Kim Hyun-Ah said.

At that, we entered the cave, and we saw a scenery I couldn’t quite describe. The name said something about a pond, but the body of water in front of us was a lake of unfathomable size. In addition, the lake was connected to the roots of the World Tree, and a hideous demon was wrapped around the World Tree’s roots. The demon wrapped around the World Tree looked like a snake with tens of thousands of teeth. Naturally, it wasn’t an ordinary snake. It was covered in pale skin similar to that of corpses, and I saw its cold ice staring at me. At that, a shiver ran down my spine. I recalled the conversation I had earlier with the Guild Master of the Blue Guild and grabbed my sword. The snake stuck its large tongue out, but it turned its head away as if it wasn’t interested in us.

‘Are we not worth fighting against? Yeah, I’m sure that’s what it thinks of us since we’re nothing but a bunch of humans and elves.’

Just then, the demon raised its guard, and something exploded behind us.

“G-G-Give him back. *Hiccup*. Give him back,” Jung Ha-Yan pleaded.

“…”

“Give him back! Give him back! Give him back!! Give him back!! Give him back!” she shouted.

“Prepare for battle,” Kim Hyun-Ah ordered.

“Give him back! Give him back! Give him back! Give him back!” Jung Ha-Yan kept shouting.

"Enter…"

The vast amount of mana that manifested out of nowhere seemed immeasurable even to me, and the mana was instantly weaved into spells. Five spells were cast at the same time, and a catastrophe of nature and flames descended on the otherworldly demon. The resulting sight reminded me of fairy tales. The ground was split, and the shockwaves from the explosion finally struck us. However, the sword-wielding girl remained steadfast in the face of all this. The way she took her stance made me shiver, and the many spells being hurled at the monster finally made it fall down.

'No way… '

I couldn't tell if the monster sustained any damage, but I could see it rolling on the floor after being struck by so many spells.

'Crazy… '

A shield surrounded the mage collecting her breath. As soon as the priest named Sun Hee-Young started praying, a transparent veil instantly covered the shield and a swarm of light manifested.

'Sanctification.'

It was a holy spell only a few holy priests knew how to use. The eyes of the monster looking at us like we were bugs changed. The monster immediately got up and rushed toward us, but it was knocked over by an attack that came from somewhere. It was the sword-wielding girl's attack. The Guild Master of the Blue Guild and the leader of the expedition party. She was in the top ten list of the strongest people in the Sacred Democratic Country, and she was also known as the Chosen Genius.

'I knew she was strong, but… '

"Piece of shit!"

Goosebumps broke out all over me.

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1. Elias' POV ☜

CHAPTER 366
LIGHT KI-YOUNG SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT (4)

“Piece of shit!” Kim Hyun-Ah cursed.

I[1] was sure that she definitely swung her sword only once, but the huge monster still fell over onto its side. The energy the sword emitted was difficult to describe with words. I couldn’t believe that a human could release such a powerful attack. If I were to exaggerate, the monster before us was like a mountain and the fact that the enormous monster lost its balance from a human swinging its sword was difficult to believe despite seeing it with my own eyes. Even her guild members were staring at her in shock, so this meant she was probably hiding her power until now.

“*Pant, pant, pant…*”

The mage was still trying to catch her breath, but the swordswoman in front of us seemed fine. I tightened my fist for a moment because I got goosebumps at the fact that a mere human could grow that strong. Naturally, I started admiring her because I couldn’t even tell where her limits were, but…

‘Did it get injured?’

The monster seemed fine. If it were an ordinary monster, I was sure her first attack would have sliced its body in half—no, the first volley of magic spells earlier would have made it suffer tremendous damage. As such, even her attack had to be insufficient to pierce the monster’s outer skin. Another volley of magic spells was cast while the Elune Knights shot arrows at the monster, but it didn’t really have any effect. All we did was buy time. The same mage was casting another spell behind us, but in our current situation, I didn’t think it was going to be effective. I shot magic spells out of anger, but all it did was damage the monster’s outer skin.

‘This isn’t working.’

No matter how I looked at it, this was going to be a long fight. If the mage named

Jung Ha-Yan ended up retiring after exhausting all her power, then our tight formation would immediately fall apart. Currently, the only ones who could damage its outer skin were the mage and the guild master's sword. I turned my head and saw the mage, who seemingly lost her mind.

'No!'

I wanted to scream, but thanks to the demon who got up and immediately charged toward us, I bit my lips. A large barrier and the man with the large shield instantly showed up, and support spells were poured on him. The large-framed man drank a mouthful of potions and held up a shield.

"Mr. Deok-Gu. Protection magic first!" Kim Hyun-Ah ordered.

"Hey, I know! Don't worry, bro! I won't die here!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

Crack!

The protection magic protecting the expedition party shattered, and the large-framed warrior holding the shield took a step forward and attacked the monster's head. I was certain he was trying to change the monster's path. His movement wasn't powerful, and he was already reaching his limits. I was worried that the large-framed warrior might not be able to endure it, but a spell flew in just in time, and it helped him endure the attack.

"Miss Jung-Yeon, I… *Cough*!" Park Deok-Gu coughed.

"Mr. Deok-Gu!" Hwang Jung-Yeon called out.

One mistake meant annihilation. If the mage named Hwang Jung-Yeon didn't use her magic when the large-framed warrior's shield connected with the monster, I was sure that the warrior would have gotten severely injured. The large-framed warrior managed to block the monster's attack, but he ended up sacrificing his body to do so. He quickly drank potions, and the combat priest maintained his recovery spell on the large-framed warrior. The rearguard had created this opportunity for us, and I thought that the mage who had lost her mind would cast another spell, but…

"Cancel the spell. Miss Ha-Yan will find… Mr. Ki-Young," Kim Hyun-Ah ordered.

"*Ah! Ah! Aaah!* Okay!" Jung Ha-Yan hurriedly exclaimed.

It seemed that she didn't really lose her mind. I nodded when I saw her cancel her spell. If they weren't going to use her spell, it meant those with close combat jobs were up next. This vanguard created an opportunity for us to exploit, and we immediately started charging as buffs poured on us.

'It's perfect.'

Our weapons became faintly enveloped in holy power as the priest named Sun Hee-Young showed off her skills. I gathered as much energy as I could within me and poured it into my sword before attacking. Still, my attack couldn't pierce the monster. I was sure that its strong skin was negating all of our attacks.

"Don't worry about whether you're damaging the monster or not," Kim Hyun-Ah said.

"Got it."

It seemed that she wanted a long battle, and The Guild Master of the Blue Guild was the only person who could lead us amidst this tense situation. It was a really chaotic situation. The expedition party kept on enduring the monster's attacks, and the monster kept on receiving our attacks and spells with its body. We were at a disadvantage, but the desperation and anxiety made us completely focus on the monster. I was sure everyone was the same as me.

However, the otherworldly human fighting the monster without blinking an eye seemed like she was in a completely different world. Magic spells flew everywhere while blades peppered the monster. The barrier broke once more, and a priest cast a recovery spell.

'Focus.'

"Focus!!!"

"We can do it. Focus a bit more!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

I did the same, and even though my attacks weren't as strong as the others, I still bit my lips and attacked as hard as I could. The situation seemed impossible to overcome, but if we kept attacking the monster, it should eventually fall. This was like how constantly dripping water could wear away stone. In order to create that result, the water will ceaselessly drip. Just like that dripping water, we were in the

process of building dozens, hundreds, no thousands of solid towers to achieve the result we wanted. My fear started to dissipate, and the pressure of making a mistake slowly disappeared because I realized that there were people who had my back in case I made a mistake.

And that was when the tables turned…

"P-Please stop it from moving," Jung Ha-Yan requested.

"What do you mean, noonim?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"O-Oppa told me. Oppa… definitely told me. He said to tie it down. He said he was running toward its heart," she replied.

"Really? Hyung-nim is alive? I-Is he okay?" he asked.

"Yes. *Hiccup*. He's alive. He's fine. He's not hurt… *Hiccup. Heuuuung…"* she answered while crying.

"G-Guild Master, bro!" he shouted.

"I heard it. We're changing our plans. We'll tie the monster down to prevent it from moving as much as possible," Kim Hyun-Ah ordered.

"Got it! Hang in there, everyone!" Park Deok-Gu yelled.

'This is… '

I instinctively looked at the mage and saw her nodding. At that, I became certain that Elena was alive as well, and I unknowingly tightened my fists. I was happy that I didn't lose hope. That was how I really felt, and I wasn't the only one who was happy. The indifference on the Guild Master of the Blue Guild's face had disappeared, and it was clear that she was relieved. She believed that he was alive all this time, but she couldn't contain her happiness after finally confirming his status. The news also made her change our plans.

'It could be dangerous.'

I was sure the original plan was to create a crack in the monster's skin and roast the monster's insides with fire. It was the reason we agreed to the long battle. It was

honestly unreasonable to change the plan while we were in the middle of executing it, but…

'They trust her.'

They trusted each other, and I was sure that was the reason why they were able to do their jobs without thinking about other things.

That was it. The expedition party changed their pathing without any additional explanation. Usually, this was a crazy thing to do, but when I recalled the time I spent with them, I started thinking that I should be able to trust her as well. Seeing that the people here had complete trust in Kim Hyun-Ah, I was certain that she had some kind of plan, so I charged at the monster while nodding. I tightened my grip on my sword so that I could help even a bit more.

"Let's keep it away from the pond as much as possible," Kim Hyun-Ah ordered.

"Got it."

At that, another spell caused an explosion, and the mage looked like she had gathered all the mana in this world within her. She wasn't worried about what was happening in the front, and she also didn't consider the possibility of attracting the monster's attention and getting attacked. To get the monster away from the pond, the spearwoman and the dagger-wielding girl charged at the monster.

All of a sudden, the monster started taking a deep breath.

'Breath?'

An enormous amount of energy was aimed at the mage who was in the midst of channeling a spell. At that, the large-framed warrior charged in front of the mage with his shield.

"It's dangerous!" Kim Hyun-ah yelled, but the large-framed warrior didn't retreat.

'Isn't he scared of dying?!'

I imagined a horrific scene, and it was about how the large-framed warrior was directly melted by the monster's Breath. Just as I imagined that scene in my head, the Guild Master of the Blue Guild climbed up the monster's back. My eyes couldn't keep

up with her speed, and I honestly had no idea what she was doing. However, when I saw blood flowing out of the monster's injured neck, I knew that he—no, she had swung her sword. The monster lost its balance once more, and its Breath was redirected from the large-framed warrior holding a shield to the ceiling. The cave ceiling directly collapsed, and protective spells were immediately cast against the debris falling from the ceiling. At the same time, chains created from magic started wrapping around the monster.

Claaank!

Shining chains extended from all directions, and as the chains tied the monster down, various support and bind spells were poured into the chains. Even the vanguards started pouring their mana into the chains.

"*Eeeeeeek!*"

The chains were difficult to maintain, and it was also hard to tell how long the chains could tie this monster down. If something went wrong, the monster could instantly shatter the chains and break free.

'How long do we have?'

I started to become anxious. I knew that we would be plunged into a difficult situation if this plan failed, but…

'I need to trust them.'

Just like how they trusted my comrades, I had to trust them as well.

'Elune.'

"*Eeeeeeeeeek!*"

'Elune!'

A miracle…

'My god.'

A miracle!

“Hold on just a little longer! Just a bit more!” Park Deok-Gu shouted.

A miracle!!!

“Elune!!!”

A miracle!!!

“A miracle for their faith and noble struggle!”

“*Eeeeeek!*”

“Eluuuneeeeeeee!!!”

And the world became filled with light. God didn’t answer my prayer, but right after I shouted Elune’s name, a blinding light started leaking out from within the monster. The brilliant light leaked from the monster’s wounds and between its scales. The monster roared in agony, and the blinding light even started leaking out of its mouth. The brilliant light contained an immeasurable amount of holy power, and my injuries started healing.

“No way…” I commented.

No words were needed.

‘Light… ’

The brilliant light burst and interrupted me.

“Let there be light!”

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1. Elias’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 367
LIGHT KI-YOUNG SAID, LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT (5)

"Let there be light!" I[1] shouted.

'Thanks, Elune scum! Thanks for your daughter!'

[You achieved an unattainable achievement.]

[A new title has been created.]

[Saint of Light]

[Magic stat has been increased by 1 point.]

'Yohooo!'

I tightened my fists and almost screamed in joy. I had somewhat given up on my magic stat, so I was naturally happy about this gift. Lee Ki-Young, the Saint of Light. I knew better than anyone that it was rude to reject the gift of a god, and I was also one of the most faithful believers who understood the Goddess of Benigoa's heart. As I observed the miracle happening before me, I understood why I was given this title.

'My magic stat increased by 1 point.'

For a moment, I thought about the possibility of my magic going over 60 points, but the noble sight before me caught my attention more than anything else. It was only normal for anyone to close their eyes in front of such a bright light, but for some reason, I could clearly see the light spreading in all directions. The indescribable glorious sight caused Elena to look all over the place with a dumbfounded look. The

light that spread out enveloped Elena and me, as well as the monster's heart.

Swoosh!

The holy power spread in all directions. The word, 'beautiful,' wasn't enough to describe the sight before us. I wasn't sure if it was because of that scumbag Elune, but I could feel his energy from the Light Bomb Potion. Well, I managed to turn Elena into a catalyst, so I wanted to applaud the scum's decision once more.

I had no idea how far the light stretched out, but one thing I was sure of was that it was more effective than I thought, and it seemed even more dramatic because it happened inside the monster. However, the insides of the monster looked marvelous as the light tore it apart. My explanation was long, but basically, the light spread out in an instant, and my first target, the monster's heart, was gradually disappearing amidst the light.

'Nice. This is the power of light! It is indeed powerful!'

[Completing the conquest of the Legendary Dungeon, Twisted Demon's Pond…]

[Conquest Complete!]

[A new title has been created.]

[Guardian of the World Tree.]

[Magic stat has been increased by 1 point.]

'A total of two more points to magic, hell yeah!'

The dungeon conquest finally ended after the final blow. It was such a boring ending for a Semi-Mythic monster. My legs were in pain, but thanks to the influence of the light, I started to feel energized. My hunger made me think about various appetizers, but I wasn't in a hurry to eat because I had just eaten many different things.

After hearing good news after another, I unknowingly opened my status window. It

had been a while since I opened it, but there weren't really any big changes.

[Checking Player Lee Ki-Young's Status Window and Stats.]

[Name - Lee Ki-Young]

[Titles - Mercenary Queen's Lover, Benigoa Holy Empire's Honorary Cardinal, Dragon's Husband, The Pioneer, The Alchemist Who Experimented on Dragons, Continental Guardian, Rift Museum Rank Four Manager, Max's Guardian, Saint of Light, Guardian of the World Tree.]

[Age - 26]

[Nature - Cautious Strategist]

[Job - Alchemist of Light - Semi-Mythic Rank]

[Job Effect - Basic Magic Knowledge Acquired]

[Job Effect - Basic Alchemy Knowledge Acquired]

[Job Effect - Intermediate Alchemy Knowledge Acquired]

[Job Effect - Special Summon Knowledge Acquired]

[Job Effect - Advanced Alchemy Knowledge Acquired]

[Job Effect - Dragon Specialty Alchemy Knowledge Acquired]

[Stats]

[Strength - 25/Below average growth limit]

[Agility - 25/Below average growth limit]

[Stamina - 30/Below average growth limit]

[Intelligence - 93/Above epic growth limit]

[Endurance - 25/Below average growth limit]

[Luck - 75/Above epic growth limit]

[Magic - 53/Below average growth limit]

[Equipment]

[Magic Shield Ring - Rare Rank]

[Ramus Tucker's Introduction to Alchemy - Epic Rank - Alchemist Exclusive]

[Juliena, the Cursed Sword - Legendary Rank - Sense of Ownership]

[Dragon Breath Potion - Legendary Rank - Consumable Item (No Limit)]

[Light Bomb Potion - Semi-Mythic Rank - Consumable (1/3)]

[Attribute - Mind's Eye - Legendary Rank]

[Unique Habit - Temptation of a Liar]

[Overall Review - Se##'s El# this #### #### Overall review is unavailable for unknown reasons.]

'What the hell is this?'

My magic stat was 53. I thought I had reached the limits of my growth, but I felt happy at the fact that I was still growing, albeit slowly. I smiled because aside from resolving many complicated issues at once, I even profited more than what I risked. Moreover, the remaining issues were extremely trivial.

'How should I make my appearance?'

Honestly, walking out on my own would be kind of embarrassing, so it would be more fitting if I let them rescue me since I had been inside this monster for a long time. I was kind of worried about Jung Ha-Yan, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to make myself look like I was protecting a poor lady. All of a sudden, a resounding shock reverberated throughout the monster's body as it collapsed. I naturally turned my body to protect her, but I was sure it was nothing. However, the risk I had to take by becoming her meat shield throughout this unknown situation was finally paying off.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young…" Elena called out.

"It's all over, Miss Elena," I told her.

"It's really… really over," she commented.

Elena seemed like she was having mixed emotions. She was definitely exhausted both physically and mentally because her ears were drooping, but she seemed determined at the same time. I was worried that she would have thoughts similar to what Jung Ha-Yan would have—like wanting to extend our camping trip inside the monster. Fortunately, Elena wasn't Jung Ha-Yan, and it seemed like she was having a hard time hiding her complicated emotions. I was sure she was thinking about what she should do after we were rescued, but that didn't really matter to me. It was true that it was advantageous to have her by my side, but I was sure the Everia Kingdom wouldn't be happy about their princess becoming a mere guild member of an outsider guild. The many different thoughts in my head were giving me a headache, and I couldn't really think too deeply because I started hearing familiar voices outside.

Similar to how light filled a cave, light illuminated us from above. The light wasn't as brilliant as the light I had created, but it was fine.

'The air is refreshing.'

I was sure there wasn't a huge difference, but the air in this place was definitely more refreshing than the air inside a monster. In fact, even Elena was starting to take deep breaths. She didn't say it, but I knew she found it suffocating to be inside the monster.

"Oppa! Oppa! Oppa!"

I knew I would hear Jung Ha-Yan's voice first before anyone else. I looked up and saw her jumping down. I was surprised, but after letting go of Elena's hand, I stretched my arms wide to catch Jung Ha-Yan. I thought my strength stat had increased, but it was definitely not enough to catch her because I fell as soon as she landed in my arms.

Jung Ha-Yan's entrance didn't annoy me.

"*Heuuuuuung.*"

She was crying, and I couldn't help but think about how I had only been making her cry more than happy recently. I held her tight and patted her head, but all I heard from her were her hiccups. I turned my head slightly and saw Elena nodding quietly. I was worried that she would kick up a fuss, but it seemed her innate nature remained unchanged.

"*Hiccup, hiccup.'*

"You must've been worried," I said.

"I was…" Jung Ha-Yan muttered.

I continued patting her, and she seemed to be calming down. Normally, she would kick a lot of fuss so that she could stay with me, but it seemed that she matured a lot over these days because I saw her moving backward. She did stick right next to me when I stood up, but what she had done still proved her progress in the mental department. Although it was kind of annoying, I was willing to endure it since I knew she had been having a hard time recently.

She used floating magic to slowly lift us up, and after we emerged from Salit's body, I saw Elias, the elves, and the guild members looking at us dumbfoundedly. Park Deok-Gu looked like he was about to cry, and Sun Hee-Young was crying quietly. Hwang Jung-Yeon, Kim Ye-Ri, and Jo Hye-Jin looked happy, and so did Ahn Ki-Mo. The rookies looked like they didn't participate in the battle, which was a really reasonable decision. To be honest, I was more interested in the elves' reaction than the guild members. Elias frantically ran toward Elena, hugged her, and examined her. It was a funny sight to see because he looked like he was staring at a ghost in broad daylight.

'Was he able to see me from the outside?'

I was certain he could feel scumbag Elune's power in me because he kept his distance from me as if he was dealing with something sacred. While I was thinking about how I could take advantage of Elias' assumption, I heard Park Deok-Gu and the guild members' encouraging words. I was expecting it, but hearing them speak those words still made me happy. Han Sora, Kim Chang-Ryeol, and Yoo Ah-Young did the same afterward. Actually, they were asking me so many questions at once that I was having a hard time answering them. As I stood there awkwardly smiling, someone approached me.

"Mr. Ki-Young."

"Guild Master."

Kim Hyun-Sung—no, Kim Hyun-Ah was still a woman, and for some reason, I had a hard time calling her Kim Hyun-Sung. However, I wanted to cry when I saw his complicated expression.

'So you were worried. Don't worry. Your hyung is fine.'

She looked like a mother bird that had just witnessed a miracle of her dying baby bird coming back to life. She definitely wanted us to talk, but she seemed like she didn't know what to say. In the end, she kept her mouth shut.

'That's right, man. Your hyung is alive.'

"I…" Kim Hyun-Ah started.

"*Hahaha*. I'm alive… somehow," I laughed.

"…"

"I was kind of surprised, but… thanks to you…" I continued.

"No… I…" she muttered.

"I'll explain the details when we return, and I have a lot of questions as well. *Ah*, we should talk about how we should deal with the corpse. I thought the party was going to take longer, but I had never imagined you'd find us this quickly. I never imagined it. Good job, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I told her.

“So…”

“Thank you,” I said.

“No, you shouldn’t—”

“Don’t worry about it too much. Regardless of what happened, we still survived in the end. *Ah*, I should also tell you that my soul has already been purified…” I added.

“…’

‘He must’ve been really worried.’

Kim Hyun-Ah looked so worried to the point that she seemed more worried than Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu. Jung Ha-Yan and Park Deok-Gu were crying, but even though she wasn’t crying, Kim Hyun-Ah had the same expression as them. I was certain she felt relieved after confirming that we were alive. I thought about how I had seen various expressions from her recently, but I had never imagined that I would see her on the brink of crying. It was astonishing to see her covered in dirt, and she had to have forgotten to dust herself off because she seemed hesitant about talking. Naturally, I started talking after taking a deep breath.

I wanted to say *‘Tadaima,’*[2] which was a famous line from those third-rate Japanese animes, but unfortunately, I couldn’t say it because it was such a cheesy line.

“So… *um*. I managed to come back alive, *haha*,” I chuckled.

That should be enough. But all of a sudden, Kim Hyun-Ah hugged me tightly.

‘Shit, you scared me. What’s wrong with her?’

I knew for sure that she definitely wanted us to hold each other in a passionate embrace as men. It seemed like she hugged me on impulse, but the problem was that Kim Hyun-Sung was currently Kim Hyun-Ah. There was a difference in our height, so she looked like she was hanging on to me. I started to get worried and looked around. Jung Ha-Yan tried her best not to look our way while Hwang Jung-Yeon exclaimed because she enjoyed this type of gossip.

“I’m really glad… you’re safe. I-I’m really… glad… you’re safe,” Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

I couldn't help but pat Kim Hyun-Ah's shoulder because she was really sincere.

I smiled. *'That's right, Hyun-Sung!'*

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1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

2. means I just came home ☜

CHAPTER 368
RESTING UNICORN (1)

The situation had just been handled, but Park Deok-Gu was already talking incessantly as we were walking, and the atmosphere was like the usual Blue Guild. He was a bit loud, but it wasn't to the extent that I found him annoying.

"Didn't I tell you? Our hyung-nim will survive even if he were stranded alone in the desert. To be honest, while the others were anxious, I never doubted you! I knew you were alive. You're not like the others, hyung-nim. In addition to surviving, you even blew up the monster's heart."

"I got lucky. Fortunately, I studied Dialugia a bit, and the knowledge proved useful to me. But I got a lot of help as well…"

"Were their insides the same because they're both reptiles?" he asked.

"Not exactly…"

If Dialugia heard Park Deok-Gu's question, I was sure she would be furious.

'Actually, it's not complete nonsense… '

I inwardly criticized Park Deok-Gu, but it made sense when I thought about it again. Naturally, it was an opinion that would put Dialugia in a bad mood. Honestly, it was better to call them superior beings rather than reptiles, but of course, I was just assuming things here. I couldn't really say for sure because it wasn't like I had explored the bodies of other beings, but there was a chance that Park Deok-Gu's ridiculous comment may not be so absurd. Their organ structures were similar, and it was probably because they were 'reptiles'. If it weren't for their organ structures being similar, it would have taken us longer to get to its heart.

'Now that I think about it… '

I really got lucky.

“You recovered, cured the World Tree, and even achieved something great. I’m sure the monster either wanted the energy of light flowing out of you, or your presence may have threatened it, so it decided to swallow you up right there and then. *Ah,* now that I think about it, are you really okay now, hyung-nim?” asked Park Deok-Gu.

Park Deok-Gu had been keeping an eye on Elena, so she answered in my place.

“He is fine now, but I can’t say for certain that he has been completely cured. However, his body will no longer crumble due to his tainted soul.”

“*Oh!* Really?” exclaimed Park Deok-Gu.

“Yes, I’m sure of it. However, I need to keep a close eye on him from now on, so he has to receive treatment periodically,” she added.

“…”

“You’re the professional, so we should listen to you. Anyway… please take care of him,” he requested.

“P-P-Please take care of him and… t-thank you, Princess Elena,” Jung Ha-Yan chimed in as well.

“It’s… nothing, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. This is the task bestowed upon me,” she said.

Elena definitely felt guilty to see Jung Ha-Yan expressing her gratitude to her while stuttering. I was sure of it because her ears were drooping, and I felt the same way. I really didn’t think that Jung Ha-Yan would react that way. I knew she valued my safety more than anything else, but I didn’t think that she would express her gratitude to Elena just like that. Of course, there was a tinge of hostility because she saw us sticking together through Anemone’s Eye. Sometimes, she would even pull me to her side. She wasn’t expressing it openly, but she didn’t want me to get closer to Elena. Still, I wanted to applaud Jung Ha-Yan for being grateful to Elena because I knew that the incident definitely shocked her to the core. I didn’t expect that this would happen, but I ended up benefiting from the acting I had been doing back then. Right now, I was sure Elena didn’t want to tell them that I was completely cured. She would definitely hide it at all costs.

I obtained a recipe for a Semi-Mythic potion, and Jung Ha-Yan reacted better than I had expected, so I basically returned victorious this time.

'I also confirmed that Hyun-Sung really values me a lot.'

I wasn't sure how, but I succeeded in getting the elves to admire me. I obtained abilities that went well with my new job, and I was freed from the issue with Jung Ha-Yan, which had been giving me the biggest headache, so I was satisfied with the overall results. The best part of all this was my discovery of the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung was really fond of me. I became even more confident about it because even now, he created a formation centered around protecting me while being wary of the surroundings. He also made sure to be at the right distance to intervene if something similar to what happened with Salit were to happen again.

Jung Ha-Yan stuck close to me while walking, but it wasn't just her. The other guild members also received a special order from the guild master to keep their guards up. The elves were doing the same, but the atmosphere wasn't that serious. Park Deok-Gu continued talking, and Jo Hye-Jin was even smiling. Yoo Ah-Young, Han Sora, and Lee Chang-Ryeol looked a bit relieved since the difficult expedition was finally over. No one really said anything to them because they were faithfully carrying out the tasks they were given, and Kim Hyun-Ah knew when to be serious and when to relax a little. In addition, I wouldn't really be comfortable if he started acting seriously in our current situation.

'We're near the Fairy Forest.'

Since we had already gotten out of the dungeon, we could technically be considered safe from anything now. Kim Hyun-Ah even sheathed her sword, and the expedition party's atmosphere became lively and fun again.

"So, how long is our bro going to stay as Kim Hyun-Ah?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"He's the guild master, not Kim Hyun-Ah, Mr. Deok-Gu," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"You're too serious that it's becoming problematic, Hye-Jin noonim," he commented.

"Rude…" she muttered.

"No, it's fine, Miss Hye-Jin. I know he wasn't saying it to insult me. I'm sure I'll turn back soon. Since the Twisted Demon's Pond was technically located within the Fairy Forest, the location probably influenced the spell, but the effect should expire soon. Am I right, Mr. Elias?" Kim Hyun-Ah asked.

"*Ah*, yes. You'll return to your original self once we leave the Fairy Forest. By the way, it's oddly quiet. I thought the fairies would quickly gather around us." Elias pointed out.

"Could it be because there are other people here? Perhaps the fairies are all over there…" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"The security around Fairy Forest is tight, and we left the dungeon faster than I had expected. I'm sure the elves who are supposed to meet up with us probably haven't received the news just yet. The same goes for the rangers, I'm sure they're still on their way to the royal palace," he answered.

"*Hm…*"

"*Uh…*"

Of course, I didn't want anything annoying to pop up. I was already in a good mood because the fairies weren't bothering us as soon as we left the dungeon. Han Sora seemed to agree with me as well because she was all smiles. I couldn't really blame her because the fairies kept on throwing rocks at her.

'Could it be that… '

I started to get worried that something untoward happened, and it wouldn't be strange that something bad happened because we had been completely isolated from the outside world for the past ten days. It wasn't that I didn't trust Lee Ji-Hye and the other authorities, but my head ached at the thought that the negotiations with the Republic might have gone south. Kim Hyun-Ah and Jo Hye-Jin definitely thought the same because they were frowning, but the voice I heard relieved me of my worries.

"*Um*… over there…"

A group of fairies appeared, and there was a ton of them compared to last time.

"N-No…"

Han Sora definitely felt a sense of foreboding, but the number of fairies was only growing. Getting hit by the rocks thrown by the fairies didn't really hurt, but being bullied by those cute little things was definitely not fun. Han Sora's face turned pale,

and if she had elf ears, I was sure they would be pointing down.

“There seems to be a lot more than last time…” Han Sora commented.

“This is… *Haha*, today must be our lucky day,” Elias laughed.

“What are you talking about, elf man?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I think it’s a unicorn,” he replied.

“What?”

“If that many fairies have gathered, I’m certain there’s a unicorn somewhere. I’ve heard that it sometimes appears in the Fairy Forest, but I never thought I’d actually get to see one…” he continued.

“Really? That unicorn or whatever really exists?” Park Deok-Gu questioned.

“You’re stupid, Mr. Deok-Gu. This place has dragons, so it’s not weird that a unicorn exists here,” Kim Ye-Ri commented.

“*Ah*, I-I see,” he stuttered.

Park Deok-Gu wasn’t the only one surprised by Kim Ye-Ri and Elias’ remark. My eyes also widened as I waited for the fairies to arrive. However, when I focused my mana on my eyes, I saw something that looked like a horse. It was a horse-looking animal that shone brightly in white, and the long horn on its forehead confirmed that it was the animal I was imagining.

‘It’s real.’

[Lalisa, the Unicorn - Legendary Rank]

[A legendary-ranked monster living somewhere in the Fairy Forest. It is intelligent, and it survives by consuming the World Tree’s leaves and drinking from its pond. It greatly favors those who are innocent and pure.]

[Checking the status window of the Legendary-Ranked Named Monster, Lalisa, the Unicorn.]

[Name - Lalisa]

[Title - Mythical Beast of the Fairy Forest]

[Age - 3,473]

[Nature - Pure idealist]

[Class - Unicorn]

[Stats]

[Strength - 94/Above legendary growth limit]

[Agility - 104/Above legendary growth limit]

[Stamina - 100/Above legendary growth limit]

[Intelligence - 99/Above legendary growth limit]

[Luck - 112/Below legendary growth limit]

[Magic - 99/Above legendary growth limit]

[Overall Review - Don't hurt it.]

The unicorn was momentarily surprised when it saw us, but it seemed unbothered by our presence. I was sure that it realized that no one among us would hurt it. Actually, it seemed as if it was kind of excited because it started walking toward us. The sudden turn of events caused everyone's jaw to drop as they looked at the approaching unicorn, but I wasn't really looking at the unicorn but at other things.

'I wonder how much all of that costs… '

No, money wasn't really an issue right now. Its radiant mane imbued with holy power couldn't be further from a catalyst. Its tail, fur, leather, tears, and even blood could even be used as a catalyst. If I shaved its horn a bit, I might be able to use the shavings as a Semi-Mythic catalyst. I couldn't help but gulp at the realization. The desire to run and capture it filled me up, but I was definitely the only one with such thoughts considering everyone else's expressions.

In some ways, this animal could be considered a mythical beast, and since it was friendly toward us, I couldn't just put my hands on it. Since the unicorn lived off of the World Tree pond, it was probably friendly to us because we resolved an ongoing issue with the World Tree. It seemed like it had a Dialugia-level intelligence, so it should be able to figure out at least that much.

"Elena, how about you go and approach it?" Elias suggested.

"What? Brother… I…" Elena hesitated.

"Are we allowed to approach it, elf bro?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"*Haha*. If the stories regarding the unicorns are true, I'm sure it won't be a problem. According to our parents, I heard unicorns like pure people," he replied.

"*Ah*, you mean that legendary thing likes virgin maidens or whatever?" he asked.

"I don't think gender really matters. I heard that our grandfather rode on a unicorn's back once, and the definition of pure and innocent is open to interpretation. As such, no one really knows exactly what kind of beings the unicorn likes because there's only a handful of people who have seen an actual unicorn," he answered.

"*Ahhh*, so that's what it is. I think it's coming this way. Hey, maybe it came running after seeing you, hyung-nim," Park Deok-Gu commented.

'That's definitely not the case, you pig.'

I would be happy as long as I didn't get stabbed by its horn.

The members of the Blue Guild felt nervous at the unicorn's approach while Elias kept pushing his little sister to go near the unicorn.

“Elena, I think you should take a closer look. *Haha*.”

“No, brother, I…” Elena trailed off.

“*Hahaha*.”

Elena was starting to panic.

CHAPTER 369
RESTING UNICORN (2)

Elena frowned. She was slowly moving back, but Elias definitely didn't notice her strange behavior. He actually seemed proud of her. He firmly believed that the unicorn was approaching us because of his little sister.

"I-I…"

Even while Elena was stuttering, the unicorn continued walking toward us. It was interesting, and when the unicorn got even closer to us, Park Deok-Gu was stupefied as he said, "Wow, I think it's *really* coming toward us… Is this safe? It won't attack us, right?"

"It won't attack us," Elias replied.

"That's a relief, but…"

Park Deok-Gu glanced at Kim Hyun-Ah, and I was sure he decided to listen to Kim Hyun-Ah's words rather than listen to Elias.

"I think it'll be fine," Kim Hyun-Ah nodded as well.

The unicorn wasn't showing any hostility, so the expedition party didn't bother trying to stop it, but Kim Hyun-Ah seemed like she wanted to be prepared just in case. When the unicorn got closer to us, she decided that it would be best to be if I stayed near her, and during all this, the guild members finally reacted. Jung Ha-Yan looked troubled and anxious for some reason.

'What's wrong with her?'

From what I knew, Jung Ha-Yan never had a boyfriend before. I didn't really know everything about her but considering her behavior up until now, there was no need for her to prove her purity through the unicorn. Actually, even if she decided to prove her purity, I could say with confidence that it was worthless. For me, the present was more important than her past, so there was no need for me to be concerned about it.

'Wait… '

I suddenly recalled Jung Ha-Yan's behavior whenever I was asleep, and it bothered me.

'Maybe… '

I thought she would always do something ridiculous to me whenever I was asleep, but I was sure it was just my imagination. I didn't really think much about whether Jung Ha-Yan would really do something to me or not whenever I was asleep. But for some reason, Jung Ha-Yan's drinks always made me feel weak. However, I didn't really think that she had done something extreme, and the way she glanced at me made me doubt if my assumption was even correct. Still, she definitely noticed my strange expression because she looked surprised by it. I was worried that she might jump out and do something crazy again to prove her innocence, but I thought she wouldn't do that.

However, before I could even say anything, Jung Ha-Yan started walking with pride. It seemed that she was doing that to express her purity, but her face looked really wary.

"I-I-It's a unicorn," Jung Ha-Yan said unnaturally.

The unicorn came here without thinking too much, and it seemed surprised by Jung Ha-Yan's approach. The way the unicorn examined her in silence was difficult to describe. I couldn't read its expression, but it was definitely…

'Contemplating… '

It was trying to decide whether Jung Ha-Yan was pure or not. I wasn't really sure why it had to think before deciding whether one was pure or not, but I was sure that Lalisa was having the trouble of its lifetime while examining Jung Ha-Yan. At Lalisa's silence, Jung Ha-Yan became even more confident, and she walked slowly as if she wasn't troubled by the unicorn's silence. In the end, the unicorn nodded after a while and started sticking its head out toward her as if it was telling her to pet it.

At that, Jung Ha-Yan was overjoyed.

"H-How cute… so cute. Look, oppa! Look at me!" Jung Ha-Yan yelled.

"*Ahh*… yeah. I'm looking at you," I replied.

I was looking at her, but I wasn't really sure what she wanted me to do. Still, Jung Ha-Yan seemed really happy about proving her purity, and I obviously felt relieved as well. After all, the unicorn proved that my assumption was nothing more than my imagination. Jung Ha-Yan and I still *hadn't* done the deed, so I wasn't really sure why the unicorn took a while to judge Jung Ha-Yan.

'Yeah, we still haven't done it, and I don't think she's that crazy to—'

However, an idea I didn't want to even imagine popped into my head…

'She's not that crazy. right?'

I shook my head and looked up ahead and saw Jung Ha-Yan trying to ride the unicorn, but it seemed like it didn't like that idea because it started moving away.

"Nice unicorn. Come here," Jung Ha-Yan said.

"…"

"N-Nice unicorn. Come over here," she repeated.

Jung Ha-Yan started to get flustered as she repeatedly called for the unicorn. Unfortunately, it turned away and started moving elsewhere. Jung Ha-Yan looked disappointed, but the results still satisfied her because she came back smiling. She looked like a hero who had just returned from a victorious campaign. Jung Ha-Yan was happy about completing the proof of innocence quest.

"T-The unicorn must be tired. *Hehe*," Jung Ha-Yan said with a chuckle.

"Yeah, it seemed like it," I said.

I patted her head until she was satisfied, but my eyes landed on the unicorn's next destination. Now that I knew that it liked the expedition team, I had to know who else it was interested in. It passed by Park Deok-Gu, Hwang Jung-Yeon, and the Elune Knights before stopping in front of Jo Hye-Jin.

'…'

Jo Hye-Jin blushed.

'She really doesn't seem like she has a lot of dating experience.'

"This is weird. I… well…"

Jo Hye-Jin was even more flustered than Jung Ha-Yan.

"I-I have a lot of dating experience—actually, I don't, but this…" Jo Hye-Jin rambled on in an effort to decide whether to deny it or just accept it. It would be embarrassing if Jo Hye-Jin had never dated anyone despite her age, so she was denying it because she didn't want to come off as an *easy* girl in front of Kim Hyun-Sung. I was sure she wanted to find a reasonable middle ground, but she wouldn't be able to do that. After all, Jo Hye-Jin had no experience handling a situation like this, so she was actually embarrassing herself even more the more she talked.

"I-I've dated a lot, but I swore to remain a virgin until marriage—Yes! Virgin until marriage! B-But that doesn't mean I don't have any experience… Actually, I do have experience, but I don't…" she trailed off.

'What the hell is she even talking about?'

"You don't have to be so flustered. I heard the unicorn really likes innocent people as well."

"Yes, y-you're right. I'm pretty innocent… so that must be the reason why."

'Don't belittle yourself… '

I started to pity Jo Hye-Jin even more because Kim Hyun-Sung didn't really seem interested in her despite the many signals she had been sending over to him. Still, I was convinced that a situation as sad as Jo Hye Jin's situation was rare.

While Jo Hye-Jin was panicking, the unicorn remained friendly, and it kept on rubbing its neck on her head, causing her to blush even more. At this point, I was starting to get worried that she would humiliate herself even further.

'Just tame it.'

Jo Hye-Jin was a spear user, so horseriding would definitely be a useful skill for her. Of course, we still had the Saint of Light, Light Ki-Young, ready to communicate with the unicorn if worse comes to worst.

'Oh, that's it… '

I had no idea why but it was reacting differently compared to when it approached Jung Ha-Yan. In fact, it even started acting cute in front of Jo Hye-Jin. Anyone could tell that this was her chance to tame it, but she was still panicking. If I were here, I would have already tried to get on the unicorn's back.

All of a sudden, the unicorn got up and started moving again, and it was heading toward me with an urgent look. Naturally, I was happy at the thought that the unicorn might have chosen me, but…

'There's no way.'

Elias pushed Elena, and Jung Ha-Yan, who failed to get on its back earlier, looked excited at the thought that the unicorn might be coming back for her. However, the elf siblings made the first move.

"Elena, try petting it," Elias suggested.

"*Ah*… okay," Elena said.

Elena hesitantly extended her hand out, but it passed by her.

"*Pffft!"* Jung Ha-Yan smirked while displaying the smile of the victor.

"S-She must be an easier girl than we thought, oppa. D-Don't you agree?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"*Ah*… yeah…" I said.

"Y-You have to be careful, too. It can't be helped since she's treating you, but she's not a pure person. W-We have no idea what she's thinking…" she warned.

Jung Ha-Yan was making it worse by whispering to me. Jung Ha-Yan was slandering Elena, but I was too worried about myself to protect Elena. In addition, there wasn't really anything I could do about it. I glanced at the siblings and saw Elias' stupefied expression, which made me nod at Jung Ha-Yan's words in agreement.

The unicorn showed kindness toward Sun Hee-Young and Kim Ye-Ri. However, it passed by Yoo Ah-Young and Han Sora. Seeing that it also passed by the male

members of the Blue Guild and the Elune Knights, none of the men here had to be pure. I couldn't help but think that perhaps I had a chance, but when my eyes met with the unicorn's eyes and saw through its feelings, I had to take a step back.

'Alright, I won't go near you, you bastard. I don't want to be near you anyway.'

After roaming around for a while, the unicorn stopped in front of our lovely regressor.

"*Ah*…"

Kim Hyun-Ah wasn't surprised, and she wasn't blushing. She simply smiled and patted its head.

"The unicorn is cute, *haha*," Kim Hyun-Ah laughed.

She even patted its back. Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she was feeling a sense of defeat, and Elena, who couldn't even be compared to them, still looked flustered. She seemed like she was making strange eye contact with Elias, but I didn't know what those two were talking about, and to be honest, I wasn't really interested. The expedition members started gathering around the unicorn, and it had to be overjoyed because it started quivering.

"I'm not sure if it's telling me to get on…" Kim Hyun-Ah hesitated.

"Try getting on its back, bro. Perhaps Hye-Jin noonim should do it. I'm not sure what's going on, but getting on its back is a good thing, right?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I'm not sure, but I think it'll be more fitting if Miss Hye-Jin gets on its back. Don't you have experience in riding horses?" she asked.

"I do, but… I'm okay," Jo Hye-Jin rejected.

"I'm sure it'll be really helpful," she told her.

Jo Hye-Jin seemed doubtful and ashamed about the idea because I was sure it would be humiliating to appear on the battlefield on a unicorn. The enemies could fear the unicorn, but they could also make fun of Jo Hye-Jin for riding one into the battlefield.

"Riding on the unicorn's back doesn't really make you its owner, but I think it's worth

a try, Miss Hye-Jin," Kim Hyun-Ah suggested.

"Wait, I… you see."

She urged Jo Hye-Jin with a smile, and with that one remark, everyone started urging her to get on. Park Deok-Gu kept pressuring her to get on along with Ahn Ki-Mo. The other female guild members and even the Elune Knights urged her to get on its back. I almost cried with laughter when I saw how Jo Hye-Jin started looking more like a tomato as time went on.

"As I've said before, I'm… sure it'll reject me. It's not what you think," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"But isn't it worth trying?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I-I'm sure it'll reject me," she repeated.

Unfortunately, the possibility of that happening was close to zero.

Park Deok-Gu started physically pushing her toward the unicorn. In the end, Jo Hye-Jin got on the unicorn's back with a long face. I thought perhaps the unicorn would reject her, but it started neighing as if it was happy. All of a sudden, Jo Hye-Jin and the unicorn briefly shone brightly.

"*Ooohhh*…"

I knew it…

Jo Hye-Jin blushed upon being surrounded by the applauding expedition members.

[Player Jo Hye-Jin has obtained a new title.]

[Title - Absolutely Perfect Virgin Maiden]

[Title - Unicorn Owner]

It was a pleasant surprise to own a unicorn, but the 26-year-old Jo Hye-Jin didn't seem happy about it at all.

CHAPTER 370
A LUCKY DAY (1)

"It's… not what you think. As I've mentioned before, I…" Jo Hye-Jin tried to explain.

"…"

No one said anything to Jo Hye-Jin, but on our way to the royal palace, the way she kept making excuses made her look a bit pitiful, and in a way, it was sad how she kept ignoring her flawless innocence. It would have been better if she didn't make a big deal out of it, but she was digging her own hole, so it was hard for me to react to it. The Elune Knights were looking at her with admiration, so I understood why she was feeling embarrassed, and even though they weren't talking to us, I heard the knights talking amongst themselves.

"She's an amazing human."

"Flawless innocence. She's a human worthy of admiration."

"She was actually chosen by a unicorn…"

I was sure Jo Hye-Jin heard them as well.

"*Ha… haha*. I don't know how this happened, but I-I think I was lucky. It's really unusual. I-I was pretty popular back on E-Earth as well," Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

'Liar.'

She was definitely pretty, but I was sure that no man would approach her first.

"I'm certain this unicorn has mistaken me for someone else. I'm sure of it," she commented.

[Title - Absolutely Perfect Virgin Maiden]

I was really curious as to how Jo Hye-Jin obtained that title and wondered if it was

because she didn't really have any contact with the opposite sex other than Kim Hyun-Sung. However, the thought of it made me pity her a little, and I was sure her situation here was the same as when she was on Earth. To make things worse, the slow-witted Kim Hyun-Sung seemed unaware that there was something brewing between him and Jo Hye-Jin. I couldn't help but imagine a gray-haired Jo Hye-Jin riding on the unicorn's back.

'I pity her... '

Even Love Doctor Park Deok-Gu felt the same, and he had to have noticed why Jo Hye-Jin was acting that way because he started talking quietly. I wasn't sure if his advice was going to help, but if she really wanted to get rid of her flawless innocence, she desperately needed help.

"Hey, it's nothing to be embarrassed about."

"…"

"You're kind of slower than others, but I'm sure you'll find someone you'll like. There's someone out there for everyone," Park Deok-Gu continued.

"I told you already… that's not the case for me," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"Come to me anytime you need counseling. I'm confident that I can help you both mentally and physically. The same goes for you, hyung-nim. Don't you agree?" he asked.

"Of course. That's what friends are for," I replied.

"It's really not what you think. Like others, I lived an ordinary—yes, ordinary life…" she said.

"Hey, there's no need to give excuses. You're not the problem. It's something anyone can experience. I can confidently say that the first step is to just accept it. If you keep avoiding it, it'll be really difficult for you to start dating. This is an extension of the relationship between people, so blaming yourself like that is not a good habit. You're not the only one who went through that," explained.

'This pig is being more serious than I thought.'

“It’s easy for me to tell. Lowering your standards can also be a solution—*ah*, most of all, you’ve been really busy lately, so, of course, it’s only natural that you didn’t have any time to concern yourself with it, Hye-Jin noonim,” he continued.

“Yes, I’m too busy…”

Seeing that she was always with Kim Hyun-Sung, time wasn’t really the problem here.

“It’s difficult to do something about it right now, but I can coach you whenever we have time, and hyung-nim will be there as well, right?” he asked.

I honestly wasn’t sure what he meant by coaching, but I nodded for now because of the unicorn that was following Jo Hye-Jin. For me, it was a good thing if Jo Hye-Jin maintained her flawless innocence or whatever since I needed catalysts, but if she and Kim Hyun-Sung really did start dating one day, that unicorn may just fly away someday.

‘I can’t let that happen.’

I felt bad for my friend, but I would prefer it if she lived a life of solitude for the next seven to ten years or at least until I had acquired everything I wanted from that unicorn.

“Mr. Deok-Gu is completely correct, but I think it’d be best if we talk about this later. The same goes for you as well, Mr. Ki-Young…” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“You made the right choice,” Park Deok-Gu commented.

“I agree,” I said.

I really wanted to cheer her on, but the fact that I couldn’t was regretful. I felt kind of uncomfortable, but today could be considered my lucky day.

‘I feel like I got what I wanted… ’

Of course, it wasn’t my unicorn, but…

‘It belongs to a guild member, so it’s basically mine.’

What was theirs was mine, and what was mine was *mine.* The unicorn definitely didn't think that far, but it didn't matter to me.

The first item I obtained after my job changed to Alchemist of Light was the Light Bomb Potion. If we assumed that I would be able to develop two to three potions that were as strong as the Light Bomb Potion, then it would be safe to assume that I was powerful enough for my Semi-Mythic job. I couldn't help but remember the time when I had to wield a spear because I lacked the mana to cast magic, and I was once again reassured that I had joined the right party. The expedition party was also happy because just about anyone could tell that the expedition was a huge success.

As for Salit's corpse, I couldn't process it, but there was another member in the guild with a production-type job.

'Yoo Ah-Young.'

The monster's leather was strong enough to withstand Kim Hyun-Ah and Jung Ha-Yan's attacks, and even though it was buffed after being influenced by magic and the Twisted Demon's Pond, the tough leather wasn't going to get weaker. As such, we would be able to fully arm Park Deok-Gu and Yoo Ah-Young, and the monster's bones could also be processed into weapons. The biggest achievement was curing Light Ki-Young and gaining the full trust of our allies. We had two Elune Knights as casualties. It was heartbreaking, but I didn't really know them, so I considered them a small sacrifice for the greater good.

'Indeed.'

Perhaps it was because they overexerted themselves in the dungeon, but I noticed that everyone had become a bit stronger than before. Yoo Ah-Young, Han Sora, and Lee Chang-Ryeol reaped a lot of benefits, and it was the same for the other members. The easygoing Ahn Ki-Mo became more easygoing, while the talented Kim Ye-Ri managed to go beyond her limits once again.

'Well, Jo Hye-Jin is Jo Hye-Jin.'

Sun Hee-Young had always been getting stronger without anyone helping her, while I already expected Park Deok-Gu's growth. Meanwhile, Kim Hyun-Ah…

[Checking Player Kim Hyun-Sung's Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Kim Hyun-Sung]

[Title - Regressor of Altanus, Swordsman that Starts the Second Round, One Who Couldn't Overcome, One Who Sacrifices, The Awakened. Swordsman Blessed by the Sword. Warrior Climbing to the Top, Continental Guardian. Durandal's Owner. Guardian of the World Tree]

[Age - 23]

[Nature - Kind-Hearted Mediator]

[Job - Left of the Sword - Unique Legendary Rank]

[Job Effect - Basic swordsmanship knowledge acquired]

[Job Effect - Intermediate swordsmanship knowledge acquired]

[Job Effect - Advanced swordsmanship knowledge acquired]

[Job Effect - Advanced magic operation knowledge acquired]

[Stats]

[Strength - 95/Above legendary growth limit]

[Agility - 103//Above legendary growth limit]

[Stamina - 101/Above legendary growth limit]

[Intelligence - 75/Below epic growth limit]

[Endurance - 95/Below epic growth limit]

[Luck - 99/Above epic growth limit]

[Magic - 97/Above epic growth limit]

[Attribute]

[Attribute - New - Legendary Rank]

[Attribute - Sword - Legendary Rank]

[Attribute - Fusion - Legendary Rank]

[Attribute - Work - Legendary Rank]

[Gear]

[Cloak of Magic Resistance - Epic Rank]

[Balmain's Fine Magic Armor - Legendary Rank]

[Serena's Agile Wind Boots - Legendary Rank]

[Sword of the 12 Knights - Durandal - Mythic Rank]

[Overall Review - Don't backstab him, seriously. If you do, you and I will both die. I have warned you. Don't backstab him no matter what.]

'Wow, so reliable.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had grown even more since the last time I checked his stats.

'When did he change his job?'

I was sure his job wasn't a unique legendary job back when I previously checked his

stats. He obtained a unique legendary job without my knowledge, so he had to have achieved something great while I wasn't there. His epic job—Swordsmanship Expert—had disappeared, but he obtained four legendary attributes. A player would find it difficult to obtain even a single attribute, so he achieved something great by obtaining four.

'Has he not broken the seal yet?'

I was sure that he didn't manage to revive the Durandal, which was a Mythic sword. It was a famous sword, and since Kim Hyun-Sung seemed like he wanted to become a pure swordsman, his stats distribution was really plain. In other words, he was already strong enough without any add-ons. The system couldn't give me any information about his experience and swordsmanship, so it was safe to assume that even the system didn't have any detailed information about him. As such, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that he possessed a lot more things than what the system could show me. If he managed to shatter the seal on the Sword of the 12 Knights, Durandal, he might even become strong enough to fight Salit on his own. Of course, he still had to increase his stats to do so.

'He may have something like an Altanus Benigoa buff… '

I started thinking if Cha Hee-Ra was stronger than Kim Hyun-Sung, but my opinion changed after seeing his growth. He should be able to face Cha Hee-Ra because the former's stats were really one-sided, and she lacked points in her intelligence stat. Of course, I didn't really care about whether either of them was stronger than the other. I was just happy that reliable people like them were on my side. As such, the expedition this time could be considered a complete success.

I turned my head and noticed Kim Hyun-Ah returning to her original form.

'Ah… it wore off.'

It was a dangerous thought, but I was disappointed for some reason.

"You finally came back."

"Congratulations, oppa,"

"Thanks, Ye-Ri."

“Congratulations, Guild Master.”

“Thank you, Miss Hye-Jin.”

We obtained more than we had to sacrifice. It felt like we were returning home with food in our hands. I was feeling anxious because of how lucky we were, but I was sure the outside world wasn’t that chaotic since we were gone for only a little over ten days. I started feeling overwhelmed when I thought about how we should deliver the good news.

However, we suddenly saw a ranger running toward us urgently.

“Please wait a moment…”

‘Shit.’

As expected, my gut feeling wasn’t wrong.

‘Did something happen?’

The original plan was that there were supposed to be people out here to congratulate us for our safe return rather than a sole ranger. The elf running toward us didn’t seem like he was hurt, but he was probably exhausted because he seemed like he had been running without taking a break. It could only mean that he had urgent news to deliver. I started praying that it wasn’t anything serious, but my hopes were quickly shattered.

“Did… something happen? Why is he…” Park Deok-Gu asked.

Bad things usually happened after a lucky day.

“What’s wrong?” Elias asked.

The ranger desperately tried to catch his breath. He took a deep breath before answering. “*Whoo*—war—*whoo.* War broke out.”

“Shit,” I cursed without realizing it.

CHAPTER 371
A LUCKY DAY (2)

'No wonder I was feeling nervous… '

I somewhat expected it.

'I just thought it would be unlikely… '

The Republic's extreme choice was basically a gamble on their side because justice was on our side. The fact that they took the side of Demon Summoner Jin Cheong, considering the current situation of the continent, meant that the Republic basically didn't care about foreign affairs. Obviously, not every nation was sensitive to demons like the Sacred Democratic Country, Laios, and a few other nations like Everia, but…

'It's still unreasonable.'

On this continent, it was unthinkable to turn one's back on god. Even if the Republic's demon group decided to go in that direction, I was still doubting it.

It wasn't really strange that I was doubting it since war wasn't something one could easily decide on doing. In addition, it also wasn't something one could do with less than a month's preparation. If I were the leader of the Republic, I would have taken my sweet time before making a decision, but it would be a different story if the Republic had always been planning on declaring war all this time.

'No, it's still unreasonable.'

Now that I thought about it, Cheon Kwan-Wi and Yu Ran of the Eight Seats once mentioned that the Republic was moving strangely. Still, this wasn't the right time to declare war, even if what they said was true. There was just no way they would pull the trigger first, especially if the two groups were on a similar level. There were only two—no, three reasons why the Republic decided to pull the trigger before anyone else. Firstly, they had gone mad. Secondly, they were extremely confident of their victory, and lastly, they were in a situation where they had no other choice but to declare war. There was a chance that they were trying to resolve their internal issues

by blaming an outsider for it, or they could also be confident about taking over the Sacred Democratic Country. Still, it was unclear if they were the ones who started the war.

I still hadn't heard how the war started, but this was definitely an uncomfortable situation.

'I'm also worried about the Union of Kingdoms… '

There was a chance that a few nations scared of the Sacred Democratic Country's revolutionary ideas joined hands with the Republic. It was true that both nations didn't have a monarchy, but unlike the Sacred Democratic Country, which was established through a bloody revolution, the Republic's leader simply changed their title from Emperor to President. The leaders of those nations might not be fond of the people's victory in the Sacred Democratic Country depicted through the goddess' mirror.

Once I started thinking about it, I found myself unable to stop, and the trivial thoughts were giving me a headache. However, I wasn't the only one having a headache over this matter.

'Is… '

Kim Hyun-Sung also looked troubled.

'Is this a war that wasn't supposed to happen? Or did it happen earlier than expected?'

I was frustrated because I had no idea what happened in Kim Hyun-Sung's past life. In addition, I wasn't really sure whether this war was beneficial to us or not. All I could do was guess. Kim Hyun-Sung looked unhappy about the war, and I was sure that he wasn't looking forward to this conflict, even though it was an opportunity to send the masked scum Jin Cheong to his grave. The only thing I could deduce right now was that Kim Hyun-Sung didn't regress because of the Republic or the masked scum. Kim Hyun-Sung was most likely worried about our lack of power and military strength to confront the unknown threat that popped up in his past life. If I assumed that an incredibly huge accident would happen in the near future, it was only natural that he was unhappy about humans fighting each other.

Kim Hyun-Sung, Benigoa, and Elune trash were silent as well.

'Is it top secret or something? Or is it something he can't tell me?'

The war would be understandable if the masked scum had sided with an unknown force, but whatever it was, I was having a headache because I couldn't create any plans about something I had no information about. I still had no idea why war broke out, but since it had already started, we had to create plans on how to deal with it.

'Do I need to stop him or something?'

If we were to fight this war with the mindset of just killing the enemy, our forces would decrease regardless of victory or defeat. Even if the Sacred Democratic Country won, the damage would still be too much. We would win the war, but we wouldn't be able to prepare for what would inevitably come afterward.

As a deafening silence surrounded us, I muttered, "Mr. Hyun-Sung, is this…"

"Yes?"

"No, it's nothing. I just don't have any idea what to do," I told him.

"I… think we should head back to the royal palace for now and figure out the situation. We need to know the details about what's going on. Has the Everia Kingdom been affected yet?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

The elf messenger looked nervous, so he definitely didn't have that much information. Still, he gave us an answer, "Not yet, but we received news that enemy forces are heading for the royal palace. I think they're trying to isolate the reinforcements heading for the Democratic Country and Laios instead of attacking the palace directly."

'I knew it.'

The World Tree was there, and as long as the protective spells it had were maintained, the enemy forces wouldn't be able to enter Everia. However, their goal was to isolate the Everia Kingdom, so I was sure they were trying to interrupt Everia's supply chain and military forces.

"How's the Democratic Republic?" I asked.

"Sir, the Democratic Country…" the elf trailed off.

“Yes?”

“Dawan’s front line has collapsed, and Castle Rock has been surrounded by enemy troops,” he answered.

‘Shit. It’s more serious than I thought… ’

I was stupefied to hear about the collapse of Dawan’s front line, and if the defense in Castle Rock were to collapse, the friendly forces would have to retreat all the way back to Lindel. If the enemy managed to capture Lindel as well, then they would be able to reach the capital in no time. Since Dawan’s front line had collapsed, Laios' situation shouldn’t be that great as well.

‘Ah… ’

The situation was getting worse by the minute.

“Let’s hurry up and go back.”

“Okay.”

The guild members nodded in agreement. We raised our guards up and started moving as fast as we could. Eventually, we finally saw the royal palace and the current situation in Everia.

Many soldiers were on standby, and there were a few of them who looked scared. The enemy forces were still on their way here, but a few soldiers already looked scared. Of course, I would probably be scared as well if I were in their shoes.

As we got even closer to the royal palace, we saw soldiers and guards. They conducted a simple and straightforward security procedure and greeted us afterward. Leaders of the elves started talking seriously to Elias and Kim Hyun-Sung.

The atmosphere became heavy again. I became a little hopeful when I saw some unfamiliar faces and saw a group walking toward us. They obviously weren’t natives of Everia because they belonged to a different race.

‘Dwarves?’

I was sure of it. Their appearance was the exact description of what I had read about

dwarves. The one in the front was definitely the leader of the group because he was well-armed, and his arrival astonished both Kim Hyun-Sung and Elias. Even the expedition party members started talking among themselves.

I didn't expect that situation to progress this far while we were inside the dungeon. So many things were happening at once that I couldn't keep up, but I nodded. I wasn't really sure what was going on, but it was definitely something bad since the dwarves were here.

"It's been a while, Mr. Bolgor."

"Elias, glad to see you. I never imagined we'd meet like this… How did the expedition go?" he asked.

"Fortunately, we completed it safely. If you're here, that means…" Elias paused.

"We decided to help as well," Bolgor replied.

"That's good news," Elias commented.

"Who knew I'd be so touched by a human's speech? *Haha*. You have guests. Nice to meet you, Guild Master of the Blue Guild and Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country. You can call me Bolgor," he introduced.

"It's nice to meet you, Mr. Bolgor," I said.

"I've heard a lot about you," he said.

"Excuse me?" I asked.

"You're exactly like how the small human woman described you. You look like you've been through a lot," he explained.

'What is he talking about?'

"*Ah*, now that I think about it…"

"We don't know exactly what's going on since we arrived not too long ago… I don't really understand why you decided to join us," I told him.

“Humans visited the kingdom five days ago, and they shared many conversations with His Majesty, the King. I didn’t think the elf or that human woman would be able to change His Majesty’s mind, but in the end, it all worked out. I was also touched by what I heard, and that’s the reason why we’re here,” Bolgor explained.

‘Nice.’

Looks like the Three Nation Alliance had its own plans. I wasn’t really sure about the progress of their plans, but I was sure that what they were doing would be advantageous when it came to the growth of the number of our soldiers. It was strange, but for some reason, I had an idea about the person behind this. A certain individual popped into my head the moment I heard Bolgor describe a *small human woman*.

‘Lee Ji-Hye?’

I thought she was in Laios, but it seemed that she came here. I looked around while talking to the dwarf, and I started seeing people with the Black Swan Guild’s insignia, so she could also be on her way here right now. Naturally, I thought that I needed more information, so I spoke to Kim Hyun-Sung, Elias, and Bolgor. Hearing the situation was an obvious thing to do, but I wanted more details than what was on the surface.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung.”

“Yes?”

“There’s something else I need to look into. You can go first and listen. I’ll meet up with you later,” I told him.

He seemed kind of doubtful, but he nodded and continued the conversation with the others. He decided that not everyone had to go into the meeting room.

“Alright, Mr. Ki-Young. I think it’s best if the rest of you head back to your rooms and prepare. Miss Ah-Young, please focus on repairing gears and expanding our inventory of personal supplies. For the others, if you need to rest, go ahead and do so. I’ll explain our plans and the current situation later. Mr. Deok-Gu, Miss Hee-Young, and Miss Hye-Jin, please come with me,” he ordered.

“Okay, Guild Master.”

“Got it. Don’t worry about us, hyung-nim,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“I’ll see you later,” I said.

“Okay…”

“Ha-Yan,” I called her.

“Yes, oppa?”

“Head to your room first and rest up. I know you haven’t completely recovered yet. I’ll find you later,” I told her.

Jung Ha-Yan didn’t answer. She seemed bitter about what I said, but she eventually nodded. After all, she had used a lot of mana, and her body had never been strong from the start, so I was sure that she had already reached her physical limits. We also had no idea when a fight would break out, so she had to recover as soon as possible.

Kim Hyun-Sung started walking with the others, including Elena and Elias. The guild members all split up to carry out their own tasks. Aside from Jung Ha-Yan, everyone looked kind of nervous because they all knew the meaning of war.

Humans and monsters were different. It wasn’t that there had never been a war between humans, but anyone would still feel nervous about war.

After I was left alone, a member of the Black Swan Guild approached me.

“Father Lee Ki-Young, if you don’t mind…”

“Please lead the way,” I told them.

I already knew where they were taking me.

‘Why is she here?’

They were definitely taking me to where Lee Ji-Hye was located.

CHAPTER 372
A LUCKY DAY (3)

"I'm sorry for not coming out to see you. I'm busy. I heard that you returned faster than expected, so the report probably got delayed because of that. Organizing everything that happened in one day has been keeping me busy as well. I knew you were safe, but you look better than I had expected," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"That's a compliment, right?" I asked.

"Of course," she replied.

When I entered after the Black Swan Guild member opened the door, Lee Ji-Hye immediately got up from her seat, and even though I was happy to see her after a long time, I didn't bother expressing it. As I expected, she was still young and petite. She looked like she was in a daze, so I was sure that she wasn't able to get that much sleep these past few days. Fortunately, she hadn't gone crazy just yet, so it seemed that the worst-case scenario was avoided.

"Have a seat. I'll make you some tea. By the way, you must've been really surprised," she started.

"Of course. I knew it could happen, but I was surprised that war actually broke out. How… Actually, why are you here, noona?" I asked.

"It's because this place seems like the safest place," she replied.

"…"

'She's a real piece of shit.'

I didn't know what to say when she replied just like that with a confident look. Even Light Ki-Young found it amazing that she didn't seem ashamed of what she had just said.

"What's with that face? It's rude. Do you know how hard it is to live like an ordinary

person here? A physical shock that could feel like a minor injury to others is fatal to me. You should understand at least that much. If you were me, I'm sure you'd rush over here," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

'I can't deny it… '

"You agreed in your head, right?" she asked.

I flinched for a moment, but I maintained a serious expression. At that, Lee Ji-Hye continued talking. "Well, that's not the only reason. I had work to do here as well. If you saw the dwarves on your way here, you should already know why I'm here."

"You're right. How did you convince them?" I asked.

"I pleaded while crying," she answered.

"…"

"I edited the videos of the incident in Laios and all the hardships you went through, so when I cried and pleaded while showing them that video, it was pretty effective. Dwarves are simple and a very affectionate race. Of course, that probably wasn't the only reason, but I'm sure my plea was more effective than just showing them the possible profits they would obtain. Wanna watch it? It was a pretty eloquent speech," she added.

"No, thanks," I replied.

"*Ah*, additionally, I will see you sooner if I came here. Isn't it better to hear it from me like this rather than in an awkward meeting room? *Hm*. I'm not sure where I should even start, though… Where should I start?" she asked.

"Of course, from the beginning," I answered.

As soon as my words fell, Lee Ji-Hye started tapping her finger on the desk, and it was a habit she always did whenever she was thinking. I did the same, but I simply stared at her without saying anything. Three minutes later, she started talking. For some reason, it sounded pleasant to hear her tapping on the desk, but the news I heard from her couldn't be further from pleasant.

"Dawan fell first. There are many different opinions about this part, but the most

important question was whether the Republic initiated the attack or the Sacred Democratic Country. From our point of view, it's right for us to say that the Republic invaded us first, but they're saying that we started the fight. Anyway, the conflict escalated from there before eventually blowing up," Lee Ji-Hye explained.

"Was there no declaration of war?" I asked.

"There was a declaration of war afterward. Their troops died on Dawan's front line, but we had casualties as well, so they definitely started this no matter what. It was intentional as well. They didn't mention conditions or compensation. They simply charged with their forces that night. You can say that they had been planning this for a long time now. We managed to deal with the ambush, but within a few days, we had no choice but to move the front line back. Right after that, they started attacking Castle Rock as well…" she continued.

"…"

"You know that Castle Rock is currently surrounded, right?" she asked.

"Yeah, but how did the situation get this bad?" I questioned.

"It was all because of the simultaneous attack of a few kingdoms, including the Devil Kingdom. They attacked us from behind while their comrades surrounded Castle Rock, which led us to the current situation. We can't just abandon Castle Rock because it's an important strategic hub. As such, the Republic and their comrades knew that reinforcements would arrive sooner or later, so they decided to send forces to the Everia Kingdom…" she added.

"So you were dispatched to convince the dwarves." I pointed out.

"Something like that. The people at Castle Rock are doing their best to endure the situation, but everyone knows that they're running out of time. The Sacred Democratic Country and Laios have tried many things to minimize the burden, but Castle Rock is a dangerous place to visit right now. In that sense, your party arrived just in time because we were thinking about pushing them back," Lee Ji-Hye informed.

"…"

"Our goal is to send reinforcements to Castle Rock within ten days at the very least. If

we fail to do that, the situation will only get worse because if we lose Castle Rock, they'll reach Lindel in no time," she said.

"And from Lindel, it won't take long until they reach the capital," I added.

"That's right. Anything else?" she asked.

"Did everyone in the Union of Kingdoms turn their backs on us?" I asked.

"No. Just the Devil Kingdom and a few kingdoms, but I'm not exactly sure. The union was probably split in half, but we honestly don't have a lot to go on in the current situation. We're just going with the flow," she answered.

"If your assumption is true, then that's a good thing, right?" I asked.

"Of course. I'm honestly curious as to why the Union of Kingdoms decided to participate in the war, but according to the Sacred Democratic Country, they believe the union is wary of the revolutionary ideas the Sacred Democratic Country has been spreading throughout the continent. A revolution happened in their neighboring country, so it was only natural that they would have issues of their own as well. I'm sure they've been waiting for this moment, and they probably thought it was a good idea to participate with the Republic at the helm," she explained.

"I agree, noona. I'm sure there are other reasons, but it's most likely because they share interests. I finally understand why they've been protecting that demon summoner scum, Jin Cheong. If they were going to start a war anyway, there's no reason for them to kick him out and suffer a great loss. In addition, it's not like the Republic is sensitive to black mages…" I said.

"Right? Anyway, this is the report, and it contains more detailed information about the situation. I can't guarantee it, but the information you're looking for is most likely in there. So you should—"

"*Ah*, I have one more question, noona," I said, interrupting her.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Who's at Castle Rock?" I asked.

"Kasugano Yuno," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

“And?”

“Count Castlerock, actually, he’s a senator now. My guild master is there, and Cheon Kwan-Wi of the Eight Seats is there as well, so they won’t immediately fall since they’re a party of pretty strong individuals. You can also say that they’re the only people who can endure that kind of situation,” she answered.

‘Not bad.’

It was difficult to say that Kasugano Yuno and Cheon Kwan-Wi’s individual skills were overwhelming, but they were part of the Sacred Democratic Country’s Eight Seats. In addition, the troops of Castle Rock specialized in castle defense. With that in mind, it was easy to understand how Castle Rock was still standing.

Naturally, I started reading Lee Ji-Hye’s report while nodding, and after reading the detailed information, I was kind of shocked.

‘They wanted to start a war.’

The conflict at the Dawan front line was basically planned out, and it felt like they were trying to find a fault to justify their actions. At this point, I was sure that they had talked it out with the Devil Kingdom, and they flipped the card after thinking that they had the better cards. My assumption earlier was somewhat correct, but I still couldn’t be happy that I correctly guessed why the war even started.

Right now, the situation was more important than the cause and what I saw was a large map. It looked like a minimap that included the situation of the troops.

Right now, it was more important for us to deal with the ongoing crisis, and it was then that I saw a large map in the report. It was a map detailing the location and the situation of the troops.

“Noona, this is…” I trailed off.

“*Ah*, you should take a look at that as well. That is the most updated map and the latest situation of the troops,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“So it’s not that bad,” I commented.

“You can say that we still have hope,” she said.

As I said, it wasn't as bad as I thought. The Dawan front line was pushed back, and Castle Rock was surrounded, but I could see some of the advantages we were picking up over time. Moreover, aside from the two front lines, the eastern front line wasn't bad, and the western front line was actually pushing forward. I felt uncomfortable by the fact that I couldn't find a way to cut off the enemy's supplies, but compared to the situation I heard the first time, I thought that it wasn't so bad.

'Yeah, the Democratic Country isn't that incompetent.'

The key question was whether we could take the Everia Kingdom's soldiers and supplies to Castle Rock. If the supply route was established, then it would be a tremendous help with the ongoing war and in the future. Obviously, the most important thing to do was to get the forces of the other kingdoms to join us because the fate of this war depended on whether we could make a breakthrough or not.

'This looks kind of familiar… '

It looked similar to the strategy simulation game I played with him last time. The method was slowly squeezing the enemy here and there in an effort to acquire what was necessary, as well as isolating an extremely important hub for the enemy. I instantly realized the mastermind behind all this. It was definitely the masked scum and demon summoner, Jin Cheong. I found it a bit strange that the forces inside Laiois were noticeably small, and it was a bit startling to find that both allied and enemy troops dispatched only the minimum amount of troops.

Naturally, I started talking because I couldn't understand Laios's current front-line situation.

"What's going on in Laios?"

"*Ah*, I forgot to tell you about that. There has been a temporary truce since the Mercenary Queen is there," Lee Ji-Hye answered.

"So what does that have to do…"

"She has been attacking without differentiating between allies and enemies," she interrupted.

'She lost her mind… '

“When they were evacuating people, the Mercenary Queen lost her mind, so the situation became like that over in Laios. We could lose soldiers if we go into battle, so both sides decided to stop attacking for now. In the current situation, it would be extremely difficult to eliminate the named members[1] of the enemy,” she continued.

‘I’m sure there’s a time limit.’

Cha Hee-Ra’s attribute, Madwoman Crazy About Blood, had a time limit of one hour. Of course, what I saw with Mind’s Eye didn’t really explain why she was still in Laios.

“How long has Laios—no—how long has it been since Hee-Ra noona went crazy?” I asked.

“Eight days,” Lee Ji-Hye replied.

At that, I thought, *‘Something isn’t right… ’*

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1. named members are people who are marked as dangerous and strong like members of the Eight Seats and the Five Star Generals of the Republic ☜

CHAPTER 373
PTSD (1)

'Eight days… '

It was a really long time. I was shocked when I recalled how Laios was completely surrounded during those eight days. I was sure a minimal amount of troops were left behind, but Laios had basically gotten abandoned on the battlefield. I wasn't sure how crazy Cha Hee-Ra became that the situation there became like this, but…

'I can understand them.'

I recalled how Cha Hee-Ra's strength stat went up to 117 points during the Castle Rock monster wave incident, so the temporary truce to avoid her was understandable. Even if I were on the Republic's side, I would still find it difficult to do something about her. To safely suppress her, one needed a party of named members from the Eight Seats or the Five Tiger Generals.

'It's not an easy task.'

Taking out the named members when the front line was currently in a tense situation was close to impossible, and if they were in the process of capturing Castle Rock and surrounding Everia at the same time, they wouldn't do something stupid like thinking that Laios was important to their plans.

"Is the Sacred Democratic Country doing something about this?" I asked.

"They're just waiting for now. To be honest, the Red Mercenary Guild is in charge of the front line on the outskirts of Laios. Once they're done there, I'm sure they'll come to collect their queen, but it seemed that it wasn't the first time that Cha Hee-Ra went crazy there. The last time she went crazy, I heard that she was in that state for about twenty days…" Lee Ji-Hye replied.

"What was the situation like back then?" I asked.

"I have no idea as well. Not many people know about it, and all they said was that

they brought their fainted queen away," she answered.

I doubted if something like that was even possible, but it was definitely possible.

'It's possible if there are no survivors… '

"There weren't any survivors, so no one knows what the queen did in the past and what's currently going on in Laios. Seeing that she's still alive, she must be doing well. I also wanted to help them out more, but there's only so much I can do because Castle Rock is more important to us right now. I'm sure you can do something about Laios, though," she continued.

'You mean bitch, what can I do about it?'

Light Ki-Young wasn't a suicidal man, and the memories I had during the monster wave at Castle Rock were basically a nightmare for me as well. During that time, Cha Hee-Ra had gone completely crazy, and if I went over there and looked for her while she was still in that state, she would definitely tear me apart. My pelvis would probably turn into mush, similar to what tofu would look like if it were slapped hard. I felt a shiver down my spine when I imagined it.

As such, I shook my head, and Lee Ji-Hye asked, "Can we talk somewhere else?"

"Yeah, let's do that. I want to see the battlefield as well," I replied.

"I was going to show you anyway. That's why I suggested we head out," she commented.

I slowly opened the door and saw the members of the Black Swan Guild. They were definitely the guards around Lee Ji-Hye. I saw that they were pretty skilled, and I finally realized how much Park Yeon-Joo cared for Lee Ji-Hye, but of course, Lee Ji-Hye cared about her own safety the most.

We started walking as I took in the surroundings I had seen earlier. The soldiers still looked anxious because I was sure they knew that a battle would take place in a few days. No one wanted to die, and whether they liked it or not, casualties were inevitable during any war.

The battle would take place in ten days at most, and we would have to fight with the people on the front line. We climbed up the barricade, and I got a better view of the

formation. However, I wasn't really happy about it because the enemy seemed determined to bring the Everia Kingdom down. It would be advantageous for us to simply defend against their attacks, but we had to take the initiative and charge at them. In addition, it would also be siege warfare. A bit far from where we were stood huge walls of dirt surrounded by wooden fences. The walls couldn't have been in a short period of time, so they were definitely built using magic. Of course, they weren't as good as Castle Rock's walls, but the way they stood was still intimidating for us.

"Who is the leader of the enemy?" I asked.

They were probably a mage…

"We have received no confirmation just yet, but they're probably one of the Five Star Generals based on their formation. I'm sure they're in the rear as well. However, it could also be a named member from the Devil Kingdom. As you can see, our situation isn't that great. I'm pretty sure the fight will be siege warfare, but we're outnumbered. The situation has become a bit better since you're here, and Hyun-Sung oppa is also here—ah, Miss Ha-Yan is here as well," replied Lee Ji-Hye.

"We can't use Ha-Yan here," I informed her.

"How come?" she asked.

"We need to look ahead. I ordered her to recover as soon as possible, so if we immediately used her without waiting for her to recover, she'll be done after using a few spells. I also don't want her to use AoE spells. And our guild master is…" I trailed off.

'I want to hide him if possible… '

Right now, they had the least information on our lovely regressor. I was pretty sure that they had a bunch of information about me because I was an Honorary Cardinal of the Vatican, but they had no information about Kim Hyun-Sung. As such, the Republic was bound to underestimate Kim Hyun-Sung. After all, our lovely regressor was just a newbie who had just arrived on this continent a few years ago in their eyes. In that case, there was a huge chance that the masked scum Jin Cheong would think that Kim Hyun-Sung was just similar to me. I didn't really care about what they thought about our regressor—the key factor was that they basically had no

information about him. I knew we were in an urgent situation, but I had to avoid using our strongest card at the start of the battle, especially when we were outnumbered. If possible, I wanted this war to be short, but it could also last for a long time.

'No one is dumb enough to pull out their best weapon from the start.'

I was sure an idiot like that existed, but I didn't really like that do that.

"Are you going to save it?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"If possible, yes," I replied.

"You know that simply pushing them back won't let us win the war, right? We have to make sure to push them back with minimal casualties. If we ended up not having any soldiers to send to Castle Rock after the fight here, it would basically mean that we had won the fight, but we would lose the war. Moreover, they only really have to stand their ground," she explained.

"I know…"

Their job was to hold us back rather than fight us. The towering walls of dirt surrounded by wooden fences were definitely built to intimidate and hold us back. Moreover, they could just easily abandon those walls whenever the situation called for it.

'But what can we do?'

We still had to push them back no matter what. I started tapping my thigh with my finger as I stared at the walls of dirt.

"There you are," said Kim Hyun-Sung.

I turned around and saw Kim Hyun-Sung and the other leaders. They had to have come outside to inspect the walls. Elias, Bolgor, and the others whose names I had already forgotten were all precious warriors who would fight on the battlefield.

"*Oh,* my, Mr. Bolgor," Lee Ji-Hye called out.

"*Ah!* You're the small human woman," Bolgor said.

“We were looking around, and I was explaining the situation to Father Lee Ki-Young,” she explained.

“I see. Have you been doing well?” he asked.

“Thanks to you. You’re still as reliable as ever, Mr. Bolgor,” she complimented.

The way Lee Ji-Hye instantly revealed a friendly smile surprised me, but she and I weren’t that different. When Kim Hyun-Sung asked me a question, I also smiled automatically. I did feel guilty, but it couldn’t be helped.

“Have you heard the news?”

“Yes, the situation has gotten kind of complicated. I was also able to get a rough idea of the enemy’s formation thanks to Miss Lee Ji-Hye telling me the details,” I replied.

“What do you think, Mr. Ki-Young?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

‘What do you mean, man?’

“I’m not sure,” I answered.

What he said should have been my line, but I still had to do some work. Right now, the priority was to carve a path.

“I heard that the command center has decided to take action in five days. If it becomes too late, Castle Rock could get in danger…” he said.

‘The faster, the better, but… ’

It was pretty amusing how Kim Hyun-Sung looked at me as if he was trying to get my permission, but to be honest, I wasn’t knowledgeable in military strategy and tactics. I just had very basic stock knowledge about them, but because I had tricked people so many times, he definitely thought I was knowledgeable in many fields. The fact that he asked for my opinion wasn’t that important. The behavior he was showing to me right now was more important to me. Honestly, he looked very anxious.

‘Is it natural to react like that?’

The demon of his past life had been crouching all this time, and when the masked

scum Jin Cheong finally showed his true colors, the demon's hand stretched toward the side of light. It was understandable for him to suddenly feel anxious since he had already experienced being backstabbed.

'But just how many times has he been backstabbed?'

It was interesting how he seemed to be relying on me. If Light Ki-Young didn't get tainted by the demon's hand, we could have resolved the issue around Jin Cheong sooner, but since we had to treat Light Ki-Young, Kim Hyun-Sung probably thought that we had given the masked scum a lot of time to prepare. Kim Hyun-Sung pretended like he wasn't bothered, but his face was filled with anxiety. He could easily fool anyone with his poker face, but I would never get fooled by it because I had always been paying extra attention to his facial expressions.

"We obviously need to carve a path as fast as possible, but there could be traps… I personally think it would be better if we approach the ongoing issue a bit more cautiously," I told him.

"What? Traps?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

'I didn't really see anything that could be considered as traps… Were there even traps in the first place?'

Honestly, I couldn't really see any traps no matter where and how hard I looked. There weren't any tricks either. The issue was actually simple and straightforward. The result depended on whether we could shake off the pressure and charge at them. I thought about it hard and long, but I couldn't think of any traps they were possibly using. Jin Cheong was the masked scum in our lovely regressor's past life, but I was sure that even he hadn't been able to prepare that much before he had to make a move. He didn't have much time, and his movements were restricted. As such, the only thing he could do was carry out his plans by the means of a spy or by creating conflict between groups, but those weren't really what the Jin Cheong I knew would do.

I looked at the map once again, but I couldn't figure out the exact issue.

"There has to be something. I'm sure of it," I told him.

"*Ah*, I see…" Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

“I think it would be a good idea to take some time to find more information. Of course, this is just my personal opinion…” I suggested.

‘Actually, I don’t think we need to find more information… ’

“I’d appreciate it if you could find more information, Mr. Ki-Young,” he requested.

“Alright,” I replied.

However, I couldn’t help but answer because Kim Hyun-Sung said that to me with a cautious voice.

It was only natural for one to check the integrity of a bridge by knocking on it before crossing it even if it was a stone bridge, but Kim Hyun-Sung’s behavior felt like he was analyzing the stone bridge, not to mention checking it out. He seemed certain that the enemy had something else up their sleeves.

I obviously wanted to tell him that he was overthinking things, but…

‘Does this bastard have PTSD or something?’

I couldn’t help but think that it was the case.

CHAPTER 374
PTSD (2)

“Have you noticed anything unnatural or strange?” Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

“No, I haven’t,” I replied.

‘Please stop.’

“I’m sure you can relax, Mr. Hyun-Sung. The command center has been doing its best to take care of the parts you’re worried about,” I added.

“But…”

“I understand, but worrying too much isn’t a good thing,” I warned.

“Alright, I understand, but if…”

“I know,” I answered.

“About the detection magic…”

“It has already been handled, but I’ll instruct the others to do a close inspection once again,” I told him.

‘I can’t get through him at all, damn it.’

I knew he was worried, but it was getting kind of annoying.

We were about to go to war, and I wasn’t really in this operation since day one, so I had to look into many other things and ensure that I understood them. My hands were already full checking the basics, but Kim Hyun-Sung visited me every day to make useless remarks. I became increasingly convinced that he was suffering from PTSD.

‘This guy… ’

He obviously looked anxious. I wasn't sure why, but his expression became worse as time went on. His expression yesterday was different, and it was different today as well. It had gotten to the point that I was worried about joining the war while under the influence of his mood. Of course, it didn't mean that I would postpone our plans or think of other ways. In terms of power, we determined that we were superior to the enemy, and we knew that if we didn't break through them, we would be at a disadvantage. I understood Kim Hyun-Sung's feelings, but we couldn't push this back because wasting time here meant we would be abandoning Castle Rock, which was an important strategic location.

Naturally, I looked over at our lovely regressor. He wasn't scared, but he was worried about the current situation more than anyone else. It was to the point that I wanted to know Kim Hyun-Sung's current thoughts.

"We have to consider the possibility of those walls of dirt being a trap. They could've cast a spell on those walls, and the soldiers protecting those walls could be carrying explosive spells embedded on their items…" Kim Hyun-Sung started.

'Would they really sacrifice that many soldiers?'

"I also think that internal observation should be done a little more thoroughly. We should be more vigilant regarding the dwarves… This is a bit random, but we should also investigate the plague as well," he suggested.

"The plague?" I questioned.

'What's with the sudden plague remark, man?'

"We have to consider the possibility that the soldiers on the front line have become infected. A type of virus that infects others only when they get close enough…" he replied.

'What kind of bullshit is that?'

The explosive spell remark was one thing, but his plague remark made me stop and think for a moment. According to Kim Hyun-Sung's remark, the entire force currently blocking us could be carriers of an unknown virus, and I got curious about how he even came up with that. Jin Cheong was scum, but he wouldn't choose to do something so inhumane.

'The masked scum isn't that evil… '

"Maybe you're just overthinking it…" I said cautiously.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung continued talking, which made me feel scared for some reason.

"Don't you agree, Mr. Ki-Young?"

"Sacrificing all those soldiers for a simple trap… I'm sure it's not an easy decision even for the Republic," I expressed.

"I'm not worried about the Republic," he said.

"What?"

"That man Jin Cheong…" he trailed off.

"…'

"I'm worried about him. I'm not at the point where I can say it with certainty, but the demon summoner probably can't tell the difference between friends and foes. To achieve his goals, he'll probably use any means necessary and won't care about sacrificing the Republic's military force and even civilians. You have to keep that in mind," he continued.

"What do you—"

"You can't think that he's attached to the Republic or a group. I think it's best to make our move under the assumption that he's using these groups as a mere tool to protect himself. That includes those close to him. He's not the type of person who would consider the number of troops he needs to sacrifice in order to win," he added.

'He's going overboard… '

I knew Jin Cheong was scum, but I was sure he wasn't that heartless.

'Yeah, I'm sure he's not that big of a piece of shit.'

“We can’t assume that he’ll use humane methods or follow the war clauses under the continental law. The same goes for women and children. Actually, there’s a high chance that he’s going to use those perceived by society as weak for a long time. Please make sure to tell everyone that they should be careful about child soldiers,” Kim Hyun-Sung requested.

“O-Okay, I got it…” I stuttered.

“In addition to those, tell them not to touch the supplies or items coming in from outside…” he added.

“Okay.”

“They have to be even more careful when it comes to supplies used by the enemy. As soon as the war ends, we have to destroy the supplies they were using. I know I sound crazy right now, but we have to be extra careful once the war ends,” he warned.

“Okay, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I’ll keep that in mind,” I told him.

“…”

“…”

“Thank you, Mr. Ki-Young. *Ah*… You can go back to sleep… I’m sorry for visiting you so early in the morning,” he said.

“No, it’s fine. I was going to wake up early today anyway, and I’m glad you visited as well,” I said.

‘But don’t come too often… ’

This was his third visit for the day. He visited me earlier in the afternoon, another visit before I fell asleep, and another one right now when daybreak had just arrived. It would be nice if he told me everything at once, but he was probably trying to recall the details of how he had gotten backstabbed. I was sure he would visit me again and tell me the same thing after he was done eating his breakfast or lunch. It was interesting to indirectly experience how the masked scum backstabbed Kim Hyun-Sung, but a part of me felt guilty about it. Of course, the masked scum and I weren’t related, but I felt guilty about how I couldn’t protect Kim Hyun-Sung in his past life. It

was a common move for a scumbag to hold someone hostage, and I felt like I had already heard everything that scum Jin Cheong had done in Kim Hyun-Sung's past life. However, if all the stories Kim Hyun-Sung told me up until now were something he had experienced himself, then it would hurt me to hear him out.

'All the soldiers are carriers of a virus?'

I was sure that wasn't the case, but if I was wrong, then the masked scum had to be the shittiest person in the world. He intentionally sent them out to die. Even worse, those soldiers would die thinking that they died fighting for their country.

'That is what you call a real deception.'

The ideology that the masked scum Jin Cheong planted in their heads, the reason behind this war, and why his party was the righteous one were all bullshit. All those were actually done to sacrifice all of them. Most wars were usually like that, but creating carriers of a virus and sending them to war was an idea only the masked scum could hatch. The enemy soldiers I had seen weren't carriers of a virus, but it was possible that I simply couldn't see it, but from what I had seen, they weren't virus carriers.

"But it doesn't change the fact that they're going to die," I commented.

'You should at least follow the rules. Yeah.'

Anyway, there was good news, and it was the fact that our lovely regressor was slowly starting to realize that Jin Cheong was the masked scum. He still seemed uncertain, but based on his reaction, it was safe to say that he was thinking that way. If he weren't worried about Jin Cheong, then he wouldn't have visited me several times in one day to basically confess that he was anxious about all this.

'I think we're safe for now.'

I prepared many things just in case, but at this point, there wasn't a need for me to put them into action. I couldn't help but even think that perhaps I should start working on other things.

Under the assumption that Jin Cheong wouldn't use any cunning tricks, our regressor could start focusing on other things. If anything, I wanted to prevent that kind of situation from happening. However, just as I was thinking if I should fabricate

another scenario…

"*Hmm*…"

I heard someone outside, and it had been a while since Kim Hyun-Sung left.

'Has it been three hours?'

Obviously, I was worried that he was going to wake up from a nightmare and come back here to give me useless warnings. However, the door slowly opened rather than being flung open.

'Shit.'

I was stupefied and scared. After all, the enemy was at the front line, so it wouldn't be strange if an assassin suddenly came to attack me. I had no idea how they got this far, but that wasn't important right now.

I immediately stood up. I leaned against the wall and reached into my bag to grab a Dragon Breath Potion. Cold sweat started rolling down my back, and many thoughts started popping into my head. When sweat from my head rolled down and dropped from my chin, I saw a doll stealthily walking into the room.

"Ha-Yan?" I called out.

"*Ah! Ah!* Y-Y-You were awake," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

It was definitely Jung Ha-Yan, and I couldn't help but release a sigh of relief.

'I was really surprised.'

"Is something wrong?" I asked.

"I-I slept too much… in the afternoon, and I can't sleep now, so I just… I just…" she mumbled.

She looked really flustered, and she seemed like she was trying to sneak into my room again. I found it ridiculous how she was being hesitant, but after patting her head, I smiled at her.

“You should rest some more,” I told her.

“B-B-But I really can’t sleep,” she said.

“How much of your mana have you recovered?” I asked.

“I can’t say that I recovered the majority of my mana. I think I overdid it, so I still haven’t…”

“You can’t overdo it this time. You know that you need to stay out of battles as much as possible, right?” I asked.

“Yes, o-of course,” she replied.

“Unless it’s a *really* dangerous situation, it’s best if you don’t get involved,” I advised.

“Okay…”

“Should we go outside for a bit?” I suggested.

“Okay!” Jung Ha-Yan answered. She was definitely happy at my suggestion that we go on a walk because she was all smiles.

‘I got too careless.’

While we were walking, I started reflecting on myself.

‘Good thing it was Ha-Yan.’

It was almost impossible for an invader to get this deep into the Everia Kingdom since the World Tree was protecting the place. However, it wasn’t *impossible*. The World Tree couldn’t be understood by basic knowledge, but if it were an assassin who had changed jobs eight times, there was no guarantee that they wouldn’t be able to invade.

‘I should ask for some bodyguards… ’

I preferred to move alone, but I needed guards who could buy me some time when it mattered.

I slowly climbed over the fence while having useless thoughts, and I saw a beautiful scene once I went past it. The same walls of dirt were still standing as well.

'It's in a few days.'

The guards keeping an eye on the wooden fences greeted me, and I nodded to them in response.

All of a sudden, a loud voice reverberated.

- Give up.

It was a voice amplified by amplification magic.

'It's propaganda.'

They were about to justify the war they had started, pressure us to surrender, and recommend we join them using amplification magic. It was now time to criticize the Sacred Democratic Country's system and state, as well as appeal to everyone that they were the righteous ones. Basically, it was like a strategic advertisement.

'Well, propaganda is important during wars.'

It was our first time hearing one here, but it felt like they had put a lot of effort into it.

- I'd like to inform our beloved elves and some of the dwarves here that we, the Anti-Religious Coalition, are not your enemies. You are being tricked. You're being deceived by the diabolical lies of the Sacred Democratic Country. They are the ones disturbing the peace of the continent. I repeat. We are not your enemies. If you don't get involved in this war, I promise to make the soldiers retreat immediately.

'Tsk.'

Their words sounded absurd.

"You want propaganda?" I unknowingly mumbled and saw Jung Ha-Yan looking at me.

I was pretty sure that the enemy's command center wasn't that clear about what

kind of benefits propaganda could bring.

CHAPTER 375
FACTS ALWAYS WIN (1)

'Stupid humans.'

Of course, knowing the other party's intentions wouldn't really stop one side from doing propaganda because lowering the enemy's war before fighting them was a necessity rather than a choice. Moreover, the Anti-Religious Coalition or whatever believed that their thoughts were right, so they would naturally work on their own propaganda.

I looked around and saw that the elves in their position had definitely gotten used to hearing that voice. I was sure they would hear that voice every now and then since the enemy started building the wall of dirt.

'Are we not going to respond to that?'

Of course, we should reply to them. I asked, just in case and an elf guard looking at the castle wall replied to my query. She was a rare swordswoman with decent stats.

'It's a surprise.'

She was just a guard, but her stats were as high as an Elune Knight. I was sure that Elias still hadn't noticed her.

"Do you hear that often here?"

"Yes, Father Lee Ki-Young. About twice a day…"

"How are we responding to it?" I asked.

"The kingdom has also been using the same type of magic toward the Anti-Religious Coalition…" she replied.

"I see. *Hm*, what do you think? Don't you think it's lowering the morale of our troops?" I asked.

"I don't think so. We know that everything the enemy is saying is a lie, and we know what they want. There's no way we would believe those ridiculous remarks," she answered.

'They're well-educated.'

The absurdity of those words didn't matter because people would eventually get influenced by those words as long as they constantly heard them. The Coalition definitely knew that they wouldn't be able to influence many people. However, it would be considered effective as long as even a single person got influenced by their propaganda. After all, a single person's anxiety was contagious. Anxiety and doubt would eventually spread like cancer, and once it got bigger, the command center would definitely find it difficult to control.

The commanding officers weren't almighty. Even if they managed their troops thoroughly, they would still have no idea what their troops were thinking about. As such, people needed training against propaganda. After all, it was a brainwashing method.

'We're not at fault. We're righteous, and they're evil.'

It was really important to take the initiative, and even though it didn't seem like much, justification was also a really important part of propaganda. There were many variables on the battlefield, such as the quality of the troops and their numbers, as well as the strength of one side's named members. It wouldn't take a genius to know that the troops' morale was important.

I kept tapping my thigh with my finger as the voice continued to reverberate through voice amplification magic. The propaganda they were using deserved a nod.

- The Sacred Democratic Country is disrupting the order of the continent. In addition to fabricating a story like the existence of a demon summoner, they even turned Laios, a neutral nation, into a conflict zone. They created war and conflict by declaring war on us on the 14th. There were many civilian casualties, so the Anti-Religious Coalition had no choice but to raise our flags and go to war. We cannot just sit around and watch as the war-crazed lunatics of the Sacred Democratic Country roam the continent. The Sacred Democratic Country isn't the previous Benigoa Holy Empire that everyone is familiar with. The country is run by mobs disguised as sacred democracy under the name of revolution while holding a blasphemous book!

‘…’

- The current leader of the Sacred Democratic Country, Oscar, is the real traitor of the goddess. She’s the one who disturbed the order of the continent. She can’t even be considered the leader of the Sacred Democratic Country. She’s nothing but a puppet following the orders of Lee Ki-Young, the Honorary Cardinal of the Vatican.

‘I wouldn’t go so far as calling her a puppet… ’

I felt my conscience prickling me, but I remained calm because the elf guard I was just having a conversation with glared up ahead and spoke to me cautiously, “Excuse me…”

“Yes?” I asked.

“You don’t have to worry. We know better than anyone that they’re ridiculous rumors, Father Lee Ki-Young,” she continued.

“…”

“The elves here don’t think their words are true,” she added.

I always found it burdensome to see someone so enthusiastic about me, and for some reason, a part of me was starting to feel bad as I looked at the innocent elf guard.

Jung Ha-Yan nodded and held my hand as if she approved of the elf’s words.

“O-Of course. They’re lying,” Jung Ha-Yan commented.

“I-I saw you fighting the demon through the goddess’ mirror, and I was very impressed. I was also impressed by how you saved my friends at the slave auction house and how you protected Lady Elena while inside the monster,” she said.

“…”

It was true that I protected Elena back then, but I wanted to avoid the elf guard’s gaze for some reason.

“I’m sure all the other elves feel the same way. I hope their words aren’t hurting you,

Father Lee Ki-Young," she added.

'I'm not really hurt by it… '

"S-She's right, oppa. Don't worry about what they're saying," Jung Ha-Yan chimed in.

She was trying her best to comfort me. In fact, she seemed angrier than me. I actually didn't care what they were saying about me. Meanwhile, the content of their propaganda was getting more intense.

- The Coalition is ready to accept you at any time, but please don't come here pretending like you agree with our cause. We're not here to fight. All we want is for the continent to return to its previously peaceful state. Our goals are to overthrow the impostor pretending to be god, the Vatican hiding behind divinity to exploit people, the puppet of the Sacred Democratic Country, and the mobs following her. We know very well that you don't want to fight as well. Please think carefully. People from other races and the concerned leaders, please listen to our message.

Once the voice stopped talking, I noticed the others trying to read my expression. They had to be worried about me.

'I'm thankful that they are.'

Of course, I was kind of embarrassed, but if that was the overall content of their message, then there wasn't a need for me to be worried. However, we had to train everyone on how to consistently keep their morale up. There was a high chance that the majority of the elves wouldn't believe the propaganda, but the dwarves and the other races could get influenced by it.

'Perhaps I should have read it all yesterday.'

At this point, I was getting curious about the content of our propaganda, and I was sure the report Lee Ji-Hye gave me included that information. However, I didn't want to read it again at this point.

'I can just ask the elf noona in front of me.'

"What is the content of the Everia Kingdom's propaganda?"

"It's a variety of information, but it's mostly criticizing the actions of the humans of

the Republic. They also included the incident at Laios and how they started the war. They're also criticizing the inhumane experiments, thoughtless logging activities, and reckless hunting. The content is different every time, but that's the gist of it," she replied.

"I see…"

'What the heck is thoughtless logging activities and reckless hunting about?'

Those topics were definitely worth talking about for the elves, but those topics wouldn't affect the majority of humans. I was sure that the Everia Kingdom's propaganda definitely wouldn't have any effect.

'Why would they feel guilty about that?'

The core of this kind of propaganda was to induce doubts in the opponent's minds. Obviously, no humans would start doubting whatever they were doing over cutting down trees or hunting beasts. A more straightforward method was necessary, and we had hard evidence in our hands.

"Ha-Yan," I called out.

"Yes?"

"Prepare the goddess' mirror with Sora," I ordered.

"W-Which one?" she asked.

"We still have some left from the Laios incident, right? That's all we need," I replied.

"T-That's all?" she questioned.

"Yeah. Can you do it? And make sure it's big enough so the enemy can see it," I added.

"If trainee Han Sora, I mean, if Miss Sora helps, I can do it," she replied.

"Oh yeah? That's good. It won't consume a lot of your mana, right?" I asked.

"I-I'll ask Jung-Yeon unni and the other elves for help," she suggested.

“Let’s do that. Come back here as soon as the preparations are complete,” I told her.

“Okay!”

‘And I just have to ask for some time to myself… ’

There weren’t any issues.

The female elf seemed curious about what we were up to. She was pretending as if she wasn’t eavesdropping as she looked up ahead, but I noticed her ears twitching. Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan hurriedly ran away.

‘We don’t need anything else.’

Our throats would only hurt if we had to talk all day, and we would also have a headache making sure that the message would be delivered properly. Unfortunately, the Everia Kingdom’s propaganda would definitely be ineffective. In addition, voice amplification used up a lot of mana to activate, so it was better for us to borrow the power of technology.

I remained in place, and I eventually saw Han Sora and Hwang Jung-Yeon running toward Jung Ha-Yan. They had basically become pros at using the magic hologram artifact. When the large magic hologram appeared above the Everia Kingdom, the elves looked up at the sky before staring at me. I couldn’t help but smile at the sight. Of course, I still had to explain the entire situation to them.

“I think it’ll be good to continuously display it except when they're airing their own propaganda. As for which side is the righteous and evil, I’m pretty sure they knew that better than anyone. I’ll report this to the command center, so please spread this to the other bases. You don’t need to look so surprised.”

“I’ll make sure to spread the news right away,” said the elf.

“Thank you. Ha-Yan, test it and then activate the magic hologram. I’m sure they’ll find it hard to see the details since it’s so high up, so make sure to do a close-up shot on the demon summoner,” I ordered.

“Okay!”

“Give the signal when it’s ready,” I told her.

“I-It’s ready,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“Display it,” I said.

“It’s done, oppa.”

What we displayed was the prelude to Light Ki-Young and the heroes of light’s legendary moment. I felt kind of bad for the demon summoner, Jin Cheong, but everyone already knew what he looked like, so it was fine if he suffered a bit more. We displayed the highlights of that incident on the goddess’ mirror up above. The Republic wasn’t really particularly sensitive to black magic, but I was sure some people would start doubting what they were doing after seeing those scenes.

It had been a while since I heard that soft voice.

‘It’s Belial’s cameo. Thank you for your hard work today, honorable and great Belial.’

- My contractor, Jin Cheong. Your wish will come true. Hurry and break this seal! You’ll then obtain a greater power!

The scene displayed on the goddess’ mirror was Jin Cheong grabbing the demon’s hand and threatening the light. I was sure not many people would smile upon seeing such a sight.

‘You can talk propaganda and fabrication all you want, but you can’t beat facts, you bastards!’

Facts were incredibly powerful…

CHAPTER 376
FACTS ALWAYS WIN (2)

It was really daring for them to try and beat me with propaganda and fabrication. Without proof, propaganda and fabrication would always be mere propaganda and fabrication. Hard evidence meant facts. I knew they wanted to ruin my image, but they messed with the wrong person.

- My contractor, Jin Cheong. Your wish will come true. Hurry and break this seal! If you do, you'll obtain even greater power!

'That's it.'

- Contractor Jin Cheong. Don't you want this power? You can achieve anything with this power.

'Exactly.'

- *Kekeke… Hahahaha!*

'Hurray, Belial! Shit!'

The acting was so realistic that I would always want to applaud whenever I saw those scenes. Belial's acting was even better than Ahn Ki-Mo's or Lee Ji-Hye's acting.

I looked up with pride, and the scene had already changed into Jin Cheong selling his soul to the demon. There was an added bonus scene of him suppressing the heroes of light.

I was sure there were some people on the Republic's side who were seeing this scene for the first time. After all, the Republic and the Sacred Democratic Country were completely independent and separated from each other. Even if some sort of exchange were made, the Republic wouldn't just stand by and let videos and rumors spread. Of course, I was sure some of them already knew about these scenes, but…

'I'm sure it's your first time seeing this, you bastards.'

The Republic was probably training them as well.

'Jin Cheong, the soldier of the Republic, didn't do anything wrong, and the Sacred Democratic Country instigated and fabricated everything. Don't believe their words, and don't waver. You mustn't fall for their tricks.'

I was pretty sure they were telling their soldiers that the Sacred Democratic Country was simply looking for a reason to wage war and that the Sacred Democratic Country was the one secretly communicating with demons behind the back of the gods. They had probably told their soldiers something along those lines and lobbied to go to war. The majority of the soldiers probably had limited information about the incident, but I was sure that there was a difference between hearing it and seeing it for yourself.

'Humans are doubtful creatures.'

Our propaganda would be successful as long as we managed to induce doubts in the heads of their troops. Of course, I didn't believe that the influence of this video would end there.

'The Sacred Democratic Country isn't as sensitive to black magic as the elves?'

"So what? Would they really care about that, huh?"

The people should be able to discern things on their own. My heart started pounding as I stared at Belial on the magic hologram. Belial looked more demonic than ordinary demons. I wasn't sure if Belial had manifested in this world with its true appearance, but I thought that way as I looked at Belial in the goddess' mirror. Its face was burning fiercely, and its eyes were like fire burning in the abyss. There were cracks on its lips, and its large wings looked as if they could pierce the skies. The demon's appearance was enough for anyone to deduce that it didn't belong to this world, and it evoked an instinctive fear in anyone. No one in this world was crazy enough to think that it was a creature on the side of justice because of its appearance.

'There's a reason why light and dark exist.'

As far as I knew, every human being would inevitably think binarily. Between Light Ki-Young enveloped by light and the demon party that was so tainted it would make just about anyone gag. It was easy to see which of them was on the side of justice,

and the people watching right now already knew the answer to that question.

I overused my mana a bit by focusing it on my eyes. Thanks to the influence of my attribute, I was able to see the faces of the enemies even though they were pretty far away.

'Those bastards look pale.'

The foreigners on the Republic's side looked fine, but the denizens of the Republic were pale. They definitely received some training, but they frowned as they watched the scenes being depicted in the goddess' mirror. Some of them even looked anxious. Of course, the foreigners didn't look that much different from them. Some foreigners were biting their lips, while the others kept on sighing.

- Dirty servants of light. I will show you the power of hell. Contractor Jin Cheong, your wish will come true!

'Nice!'

- Thanks! Thank you, Contractor!

The video was about to reach its climax, and even though we made it slightly more dramatic, it actually happened, so all of this was a fact. A manipulation tester didn't exist on this continent, but I was sure that no one would be able to deny the realistic scenes.

Naturally, the enemy forces became chaotic, and I couldn't help but laugh upon seeing the leaders of the Republic trying to fix things while running around in a hurry. They seemed to be yelling something, and even though I couldn't hear them, I had an idea about what they were saying.

'Don't fall for it!'

Perhaps…

'They fabricated that video. It's not true. Don't fall for it and maintain formation.'

They were trying their best to take care of their soldiers' morale, but it was no use because seeing the leaders react that way would only make those who were in doubt become even more doubtful, and there was no way they would just sit by and watch.

I heard a voice being amplified by magic.

“S-Should we stop?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“No, no. Why end it now? Let’s watch it again,” I suggested.

“Okay!”

‘Iterative learning is effective.’

It was important for us to make sure that they wouldn’t forget those scenes.

- Please stop displaying the fabricated video this instant. The video you’re displaying is all fabricated information. It’s nothing but a self-made scenario to fool everyone. People of other races, please don’t fall for the fabricated information and open your eyes to the truth.

- Contractor! Do you want power?!

- The Republic has never secretly communicated with a demon, and we haven’t found any signs of black magic on Jin Cheong. He’s innocent.

- Hurry and break the seal! Jin Cheong! You’re my contractor.

- They’re the ones disturbing the continent. The evil group of the Sacred Democratic Country is disturbing the order of the continent.

- I’ll give you the power to devour the continent, Jin Cheong.

‘Nice.’

It was as if the hologram was responding to everything the Republic was saying, and they were definitely shocked because they seemed to be saying something, but it didn’t make any sense to me. The mages of the Republic spreading propaganda and fabricated information looked even more shocked because even though they were claiming that the video was fabricated, the fact in front of them confused them as well. At this point, they were in a position where they had to be worried about the morale of their own soldiers more than the elves, who were apparently being tricked. Of course, there wasn’t anything they could do about it.

- I'll say it once more. Please stop displaying the fabricated information right now. You're all being tricked. All of this is a self-made scenario created by the Honorary Cardinal, Lee Ki-Young. It's nothing but a dirty trick to trap the Republic.

'Yeah, yeah, keep rambling all you want.'

- Hyung-nim… hyung-nim! Noonim! Just a little more. A little more! Hang in there!

- Don't fall for it. All of this is fabricated information. The Sacred Democratic Country was the one who summoned the demon, not the Republic.

- You dirty bastards! Shit, shit! Hyung-nim! Just hold on a little longer, and reinforcements will come! Just endure it until then. Don't kill yourself by overdoing it. I warned you. If you pass out because you overdid it, I won't forgive you. I won't!

Park Deok-Gu's desperation displayed on the screen influenced not only the elves but the other races as well. Despite claiming that all of this was fabricated, Park Deok-Gu's desperation touched the people, and it was the same for Han Sora. She looked as if she was about to pass out at any moment. Even I couldn't help but tear up at the sight. It was obvious what Jung Ha-Yan and I, who had long reached our limits while being surrounded by light, looked like. The way we resisted Belial while enveloped in light made us look like heroes in fairy tales.

I couldn't help but think that the video's image quality was pretty good because it was recorded in real-time. The elves looked serious as they watched us rescue the neutral nation Laios after it had gotten surrounded by the dirty demons.

"Ha-Yah, use voice amplification magic and show my face on the hologram right now," I ordered.

"Okay!"

It was time for me to make a personal appearance, so I cleared my throat to get ready. I was a bit nervous because it had been a while since I showed my face, but I started talking in a way that was consistent with my previous speeches.

'The plan is important.'

I had decided on which plan to use.

The political conflict between the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic was out of the question for now, so they were completely taken out of the plan. The plan I thought of was a bigger picture plan involving light and dark.

I wanted to show them that this war was about right and wrong, common sense and nonsense. I wanted them to know that it would be a foolish thing to interpret this war as nothing but a conflict between nations. I wanted them to know that it wasn't just a fight between the Three Nation Alliance and the Anti-Religious Coalition.

'It's a fight between justice and evil. A fight between facts and fabrication. A fight between light and dark.'

I started talking slowly, and I heard my voice being amplified through the voice amplification magic.

"Please be with the light, everyone."

- Please be with the light, everyone.

'Nice.'

- Join us on the side of the light. Join us for the continent. Our swords should not be pointing at each other.

'The sound quality is nice.'

- We're facing the same enemy. Humanity is facing an unimaginable enemy. What you saw just now was proof, truth, and our enemy.

'The flow is great.'

- The Three Nation Alliance isn't trying to disrupt or destroy the order of the continent, and we didn't form an alliance to start a war. It's the opposite. It's to protect all the living things on the land the goddess had bestowed upon us, which includes the humans and the other races. I'm sure you saw it on the goddess' mirror just now. What you saw just now wasn't a lie or fabricated information. It actually happened, and it's a nightmare that had fallen upon Laios a few months ago. It's also a trial that all of us will have to go through.

'Indeed.'

- Demonic forces are still hiding throughout the continent. People like Jin Cheong, who succeeded in summoning a demon lord and created that incident in Laios, are everywhere. Even now, they are still looking for an opportunity to strike. Of course, the Sacred Democratic Country has also experienced a similar trial, and we remember it even now. The many things the demon worshiper, Ito Sota, caused… the country remembers it.

My heart still hurts whenever I remember those times.

CHAPTER 377
FACTS ALWAYS WIN (3)

- It's not just the Sacred Democratic Country. Servants of demons are hiding in each kingdom and all over the continent. They all have their own goals, just like the demon worshiper, Ito Sota, and the demon summoner, Jin Cheong. Their goal is to disturb the order of the continent. Even now, the forces of darkness are eating away at the continent and the light. They're moving using their powers to get what they want. The current situation is exactly what they want. Everyone, please open your eyes. Don't fall for the demon's whispers, and look at what's really important.

Naturally, I looked up at the castle wall with a serious look, and my eyes were filled with tears. Even I thought it was pretty convincing, and the light that gently enveloped me made my words even more believable.

'This is why people call me Light Ki-Young.'

I couldn't help but think that my Alchemist of Light job was a game changer because if darkness enveloped me while I was saying those things, then no one would believe me.

- What they want is the destruction and downfall of the continent. They're trying to take away your family, the land you're living on, and everything you're trying to protect. Your enemy isn't the humans but the demons and its servant who have put you in that place. The Republic has become rotten because of Jin Cheong, the demon summoner, and you should be pointing your sword at them.

No one would tell me that I was lying.

- Please lay down your weapons. You must join us and resist a bigger threat. We must pull out the demonic roots along with Jin Cheong. We must protect the land we're living on and take a step toward the future. We have to abandon the conflict between the nations and races so that we can all take a step forward. It's time to make a decision for the light. Why are you standing there? What are you trying to protect by coming to the battlefield? The Three Nation Alliance isn't the enemy. We're comrades that will walk with you. It's time for everyone on the continent to join forces in the

name of the light. Please make your decision.

- Please stand up. Don't get swallowed by the darkness. Come to us and be with the light. The continent can become one under the name of light.

The elves became emotional as they looked at me, and the soldiers of the enemy didn't seem any different from the elves. The Republic soldiers wavered when I showed up through the goddess' mirror, and they were touched when a brilliant golden light enveloped me. Their leaders tried their best to deal with the situation, but it was too late.

I thought it wouldn't be bad to say one more thing before getting into a heated discussion.

- The power of darkness is very strong. Only with the power of the Three Nation Alliance can we save this continent. A small candle cannot vanquish the darkness, but if there are many candles, we will be able to vanquish the darkness. After that incident in Laois, I realized that all of you are candles that can dispel the darkness. It doesn't matter whether you're strong or weak, you're still a candle that can keep the darkness at bay.

All of a sudden, I heard a voice from the other side.

- To claim that Jin Cheong is a demon summoner is a lie. The enemy of the continent is Lee Ki-Young, the Honorary Cardinal of the Vatican. He also tricked the continent and made a puppet out of the Sacred Democratic Country. The incident in Laios is a self-made scenario, and they used the goddess' mirror for propaganda…

- If you believe that it's a lie, then so be it. However, to yell that you are righteous without hard proof is what I call a lie. Believe what you saw with your own eyes. Believe what you saw, not what you heard. The person the unimaginably strong demon called as its contractor, who was it again? Who's the one who caused great despair and danger in Laios? Who's the one who has been refusing to appear in the Continental Court? You're probably not aware of the fact that the Three Nation Alliance was the one that submitted an official trial. Please think again. Who is the one hiding in a safe place after causing so much chaos?! I'm currently standing in front of all of you. Unlike the demon summoner Jin Cheong, I'm standing here to talk to all of you!

- Don’t fall for it. Everything you’re seeing through the goddess’ mirror isn’t the truth.

- What about you? Can you claim that everything you’re saying is the truth?

I signaled with a thumbs up to Jung Ha-Yan, and she immediately turned the camera to display the spokesperson of the Republic in the goddess’ mirror. They were astonished by what we had done.

‘Are they Russian?’

I wasn’t really sure about it, but when I checked using Mind’s Eye, I instantly saw their information.

[Checking Player Yevkarina’s Status Window and Potential.]

[Name - Yevkarina]

[Age - 34]

‘So they’re Russian.’

There was no need for me to look at her other information because she looked like a non-combatant, and her stats were honestly not that great. She wasn’t as bad as Lee Ji-Hye, but since she was a mage who could cast voice amplification magic, there was a high chance that she was a part of Jin Cheong’s party.

The way she stood there with a nervous look was pretty cute, but she definitely thought that she had a duty to fulfill because she looked like she was ready to counterattack. It was easy to deduce her thoughts, and I already had an idea about what she would say.

‘Deny the plan of the light to tackle the dark.’

Or…

'Put the blame on me.'

Either one didn't really matter because she would be reborn as a member of the demon party anyway.

* * *

- What about you? Can you claim that everything you're saying is the truth?

'Why is Lee Ki-Young here?'

I[1] started having doubts. I heard that his current location couldn't be located, but the command center's assumption that he was either at the capital of the Democratic Country or at Lindel was wrong.

'That doesn't change anything… '

This was actually better because an army was currently blocking Everia. If the plan ended up becoming a success after the siege at Castle Rock started, then we would be in a more advantageous position. Next would be Lindel and then the capital. We would end up as the victors of this war. Unfortunately, we were currently under pressure.

'I just need to deny it.'

It wasn't everyone, but I could tell the soldiers and some of the foreigners were confused, and the denizens of the Republic were feeling nervous as well. It was understandable because the video was *that* shocking. Black mages could usually only summon low-ranked up to high-ranked demons, so I had never seen or heard of anyone summoning a transcendent monster that was so full of malice a human could directly collapse in front of it. I wasn't looking at the demon in real life, but I was already trembling in fear.

'Something like that… exists on the continent?'

If the demon lord in the goddess' mirror earlier was real, then I could understand Honorary Cardinal Lee Ki-Young's absurd remarks. Of course, what I meant was his remarks about how there was darkness trying to swallow the continent. Based on what we saw, Lee Ki-Young's remark wasn't that absurd. After all, every adventurer knew the strength of malevolent beings, especially demons.

Of course, I have faith in Commander Jin Cheong, but…

'Even if that video was fabricated… '

It was still a devastating video. I had already heard of the details, but I couldn't stop doubting everything. What if Commander Jin Cheong really was a servant of demons? What if the majority of the denizens of the Republic were really falling for Jin Cheong's words? What if the military's goal didn't match the goal of demon worshiper Ito Sota and the goal of demon summoner Jin Cheong? What if there was really a group trying to take over the continent?

One doubt led to another doubt, and I was already falling for it.

'It's a lie. It's definitely… fabricated information.'

I knew nothing good would come out of having doubts, but I kept having strange thoughts. However, I still had my own task to do. The Republic and I had already been caught up in the current, and ordinary people like us could only resist it.

'I still have tasks I need to carry out.'

I had to comfort the soldiers and respond to the honorary cardinal's remark. Those were the only things I could do right now. I was deep into my thoughts, but I immediately reacted. After exhaling, I spoke and then I heard a loud voice. I was displayed in the goddess' mirror, and I obviously looked nervous, but this was the best I could do.

'It's propaganda and a tactic. Let's not have any doubts.'

- Everything is the enemy's propaganda and tactic. It's a deception tactic to discourage our allies. C-Commander Jin Cheong didn't summon the demon. The Honorary Cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country created the incident in Laios. He created a meticulous script to start this war and a trick to take the Republic! Don't listen to them. They're the real demons. They're the deceivers and instigators, as well as the demons who shouldn't be on this continent. We must remember how much blood was shed because of the riot that took place in the name of sacred democracy.

'That's right.'

- It's a fabricated script that sacrificed the lives of the people of Laios to bring the neutral nation into their alliance. The demon summoner is the honorary cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country and his followers, not Commander Jin Cheong!

'Is it really? Is it really okay to say that they're the ones who summoned the demon when they risked their lives to save Laios?'

They weren't acting. The large-framed warrior was genuinely crying while resisting the demon. Father Lee Ki-Young and the mage were also doing their best to resist the transcendent being while vomiting blood.

'Were they really acting…?'

- All… of it is a trap. A self-fabricated story to cloud your decision. Think about why the Sacred Democratic Country tried to bring Laios and the other races into their alliance. This war was what they were after. The Three Nation Alliance's goal is to take what's ours by denying the Republic while raising their swords and disrupting order. This entire situation is exactly what the demon summoner Lee Ki-Young wants! He's the demon summoner! There's no way Commander Jin Cheong could have done something like that!

And that was when I heard a loud voice.

- You liar! I am a priest chosen by the Goddess of Benigoa and Elune, as well as an envoy chosen by the gods! You dirty servant of demons!

A burst of brilliant holy light I had never seen before manifested in front of me. It was so bright I couldn't open my eyes properly.

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1. Yevkarina's POV ☜

CHAPTER 378
FACTS ALWAYS WIN (4)

"A-Are there any disturbed soldiers?" I[1] asked.

"No… there aren't, Miss Karina."

'Lies.'

"What about the other side?" I asked.

"T-There isn't anyone from our side either. Of course, it's difficult to say that the atmosphere is the same as before, but we're trying to prevent the spread of the rumor as much as possible… Not only are we providing relevant training, but we've been keeping their mouths shut, so I'm sure it won't affect their morale."

'That's not true.'

I knew it was a lie. The honorary cardinal shouted while being enveloped by radiant light, and it happened after watching the incident that happened in Laios. The soldiers nervous about the war would feel even more nervous after watching that video.

'It wasn't fabricated… '

I had seen that brilliant light through the goddess' mirror, but Lee Ki-Young had emitted a holy light brighter than that one. It hadn't been a long time since I started living on the continent, so it was my first time witnessing a holy power that bright. Perhaps it was just a simple visual trick, but that didn't seem to be the case.

It was to the point that I thought perhaps he really was chosen by the gods, and I couldn't sleep properly after that. If Lee Ki-Young really was one of the people who had the ability to summon demons or was related to the people who could do so, then the holy power I had witnessed didn't make sense. Of course, that didn't mean everyone with a holy job was pure, but people of that level usually had strong faith. They lived their lives volunteering for their god's sake, praying for those

experiencing hardships, and they only lived for their god. The holy power the honorary cardinal possessed exceeded saints, and it wasn't an exaggeration to say that he was on the same level as that transcendent being who its their mark on history.

Basically, if he really was related to demons…

'It would be impossible for him to obtain that kind of holy power.'

It was a certainty rather than speculation. I didn't really know the mechanism behind holy power, but I knew that people involved in demon summoning and black magic couldn't possibly obtain that type of holy power.

'Don't believe him no matter what, Miss Yevkarina. No matter what.'

Naturally, I recalled what Commander Jin Cheong had told me, but…

'If he had been honest with me.'

If Commander Jin Cheong had a plan, I would have endured it and accepted everything. If summoning a horrifying being would benefit the Republic, then I would have nodded and agreed. If he had just told me the truth…

'It's useless to have doubts. He won't do something like that.'

The anxiety of the command center would make the entire army anxious, so I couldn't help but bite my lips.

All of a sudden, I heard a voice from outside…

"Miss Yevkarina, Father Bishop said he would like to speak with you…"

'Shit.'

In some ways, it was expected.

"Please tell him to come in," I replied.

"Okay, I'll let him know."

A few minutes later, a gray-haired old man came into the room. He was an ugly old man, but no one would think that he was a useless bum. The Republic wasn't at the same level as the Sacred Democratic Country when it came to religion, but priests were still necessary for the Republic, and they were respected individuals. It was even more applicable to priests with military authorities. Ignoring their suggestion was the same as ignoring the priest's faith. As such, I wasn't really too fond of this meeting. After all, I could already deduce what the old man would say.

"What brings you here, Father Bishop?" I asked.

"*Ahem*, it's regarding what happened yesterday, Miss Yevkarina," he replied.

"I believe we already announced our position regarding the incident yesterday… There's nothing else I can tell you about that situation. The Republic has already—"

"Of course, our position was already announced, but there are parts that don't make sense to me. Could you delay the others for a bit?" he interrupted.

"There's no need to do that, Father Bishop," I pointed out.

"Please."

"…"

'This is why I don't like him.'

Naturally, I sighed because I knew the meaning behind his request.

"Please have them return to their posts and look over the troops again," he added.

"Okay."

"…"

"So… could you tell me exactly what it is you want, Father Bishop?" I asked.

"I'll have to discuss it with him first, but…" he trailed off.

"What? What are you…"

“I’m telling you that I’m willing to have a discussion with the Honorary Cardinal of the Vatican’s Sacred Democratic Country. If you can prepare a place for us to meet, then—” he answered.

“That’s impossible. You’re a priest, but the remark you made just now cannot be ignored. We’re currently in a war against them, but you want to meet him despite that? Our job is to secure this place, so you shouldn’t think about anything else other than that. It’s my job to stop the reinforcements and supplies heading for Castle Rock, and planning a meeting with you and him isn’t part of my job,” I explained.

“Our job is to protect the Republic, not win this war.” Father Bishop pointed out.

“Winning this war is protecting the Republic, Father Bishop,” I said.

“Do you really believe that?!” he yelled.

“…”

“Are you sure you’re not having second thoughts about what you saw yesterday? His holy power is real. Do you really believe Commander Jin Cheong's words when he said that everything was fabricated by the honorary cardinal? Do you really think he can possess that much holy power after becoming involved with a demon summoner? I’m sure the Goddess of Benigoa will laugh at that idea. The gods do not get involved with the real world, but they’re not idle either. They won’t grant that kind of holy power to evil! He’s a saint and a holy man chosen by the light. He’s a saint sent by the heavens—”

“He’s a fraud! Father Bishop!” I yelled.

“How could a mere fraud show that kind of light? What we witnessed yesterday isn’t the same as the light we had seen through the goddess’ mirror. We actually saw it with our own two eyes. The priests are already talking about it, and to comfort them, I have to meet Father Lee Ki-Young,” he continued.

“But…!”

“How long have you been living in the Republic, Yevkarina? I grew up in the Republic, and I’m here to protect it. I have no intention of harming the Republic in any way. I just want to know the truth… I know that you’re loyal to Commander Jin Cheong, and I also don’t think he’s capable of doing something like that. However, I want to

confirm for myself whether Lee Ki-Young has really been chosen by a god," he explained.

"Commander Jin Cheong isn't that kind of person," I repeated.

"It could be the work of a third party." he pointed out.

"Commander Jin Cheong also mentioned that possibility, but in the end, he said all of it was a trap set up by Father Lee Ki-Young…" I told him.

"That could also be the work of a third party, and I can tell just by looking at the eyes of the people by his side. Lee Ki-Young is not the type of person who could pull something like that. He was chosen by the light. Fabricating a situation by summoning a demon? It will be more believable for you to tell me that a demon is doing volunteer work," he commented.

"…"

"More than that, do you really think that it makes sense for Father Lee Ki-Young to trap Jin Cheong's group when he has never seen them before? Everything necessary to summon the demon, securing a place to summon it, and the mana to summon the demon. Do you really think that Lee Ki-Young would do all those just for Commander Jin Cheong, whom he had just met?" Father Bishop asked.

"It could be a way to suppress the Republic…" I commented.

"Father Lee Ki-Young didn't even know that Commander Jin Cheong was in Laios." he pointed out.

"How can you say that for sure, Father Bishop?" I questioned.

"You saw it yourself through the goddess' mirror. Everyone in the neutral nation saw it happen. If what Commander Jin Cheong said is true, then it means that Father Lee Ki-Young was controlling that horrifying being like it was his servant. Do you really think that a powerful demon like that would deliberately plan to trick Commander Jin Cheong? Do you really think that a demon strong enough to threaten the continent would listen to one man and act to set Commander Jin Cheong up? Are you saying that he planned all that out in less than a month? Coincidence is rare. The things I'm telling you right now are all based on common sense, Yevkarina. If he really… if he really wanted to throw the continent into chaos, he would have

summoned the demon again. He wouldn't have done something as bothersome as this," he explained.

'Shit… '

I wanted to deny it, but I couldn't because Father Bishop was right. The huge incident that happened in Laios… no one would believe that a demon would listen to a mere human and act to set Commander Jin Cheong up. It was more realistic to say that a third party was trying to ruin the relationship between the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic. I knew I shouldn't be like this, but my expression was becoming more serious, and when I mumbled, I immediately heard an answer.

"How can you… be sure, Father Bishop?" I asked.

"That's why I want to talk to him," he replied.

"…"

"I want to talk to him and get to know him better. I want to know whether he really is an envoy chosen by god, and I want to know what he's thinking as well. And…" he paused.

"…"

"I want to know if there's really a being threatening to swallow the continent up," he finished.

"…"

"There's a lot of things I want to hear from him. As he mentioned, we could be in a misunderstanding, and we shouldn't be pointing our swords at each other," he added.

"The talk…" I started.

"Please…" he begged.

"I can't allow you to talk to him," I told him.

"Yevkarina!" he shouted.

“Not officially,” I added.

“*Ah*…”

“I can’t allow it officially. If the troops found out that you met Father Lee Ki-Young, then it’ll have a huge impact on their morale, and there’s no guarantee that the enemy won’t use it as a part of their propaganda. However… I’ll make plans so that you can meet him unofficially, and of course, they’ll need to approve it as well. I’ll make sure we deliver the message. The fastest would be—”

“As soon as possible,” he interrupted.

“I understand, Father Bishop. We only have a few days until the war starts.” I pointed out.

I wasn’t sure whether I was currently doing a good job or not because my mind was filled with many complicated thoughts. However, I knew why I agreed to Father Bishop’s suggestion.

‘I want to know the truth as well.’

One hour after I sent a message, a letter arrived from the Everia Kingdom. Honestly, my expectations were low, but Father Lee Ki-Young approved the meeting.

[I also want to handle this incident through words. I salute Father Bishop’s decision, who is a beloved of the light, and the decision of the beautiful and noble Miss Yevkarina, who was willing to compromise. - From Lee Ki-Young, the Honorary Cardinal.]

“How about it? Will you come with me?” Father Bishop asked.

I found it difficult to agree.

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1. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 379
FACTS ALWAYS WIN (5)

"I'll stay here at my station," I[1] replied.

"Really?" Father Bishop asked.

"Yes, and if you don't return within three hours—"

"That won't happen," he interrupted.

"No, if you don't return within three hours, I'll make sure to send some soldiers over to you. As I've mentioned before, you have three hours, Father Bishop," I repeated.

"Alright. I'll make sure to come back within three hours," he agreed.

"The condition is not to use this meeting in their propaganda. You must tell them that, and when you return…"

"I'll tell you the conversation we had, Yevkarina," he said.

"I leave it up to you, Father Bishop," I said.

"No, I should be the one thanking you. I'm sure you must have had a hard time approving my request… I'll be going now," he announced.

'I'll walk you to the entrance,' I offered.

The conversation I had exactly two hours and twenty-two minutes ago rang in my head, and naturally, I doubted if I even did the right thing. Communicating between the forces during a war wasn't unheard of, but this incident was definitely an exception. We didn't even ask permission from the higher-ups regarding the high priest's meeting with Father Lee Ki-Young. After all, I couldn't imagine them agreeing with the suggestion.

'Does he not think it can be a trap?'

The Republic would probably think that way. The propaganda the Republic worked on was mostly about slandering Father Lee Ki-Young, and they chose him as the enemy of the continent. However, he looked extremely calm when he was at the location where they promised to meet. As if he was saying it really wasn't a trap. I met him momentarily, but the smile he had a few hours ago was still in my mind. It seemed that he knew the Republic wouldn't do something foolish.

'Actually… why didn't I join Father Bishop?'

Telling him that I was going to remain at my station could just be an excuse in some way. After all, the answer was already there.

'I wasn't confident that I would remain steadfast.'

I was scared that my values, the Republic and everything I trusted were going to be destroyed. I wanted to know the truth, but I wasn't confident enough to face it directly. It was contradictory, but there wasn't much I could do because I was a coward.

'He's also someone I need to fight… '

I looked out the window and saw the small tent where the two were talking, and of course, I was curious about their conversation.

And that was when I heard a voice beside me…

"Are you sure it's okay, Miss Yevkarina?"

"*Ah*, Jin Wing, you're here," I said.

"…"

"I'm sure it's fine. They probably won't do anything dirty. Even if it's an unofficial conversation, it's still a conversation between priests. Neither Father Bishop nor Father Lee Ki-Young will do something foolish," I replied.

"I see. Father Bishop is…"

"Don't worry about him. He's a bit stubborn, but he's someone we really need in the Republic. He won't do anything that will harm the Republic. From his point of view,

he might actually be thinking that we're not reliable since we're foreigners," I added.

"Understandable, but Miss Karina…" Jin Wing started.

"Yes?"

"What's the reason?" he asked.

"The reason?" I questioned.

"Yes, I honestly don't understand it. I was told that it was because of Father Bishop's honor, but…" he paused.

"I'm not sure either. Really," I answered.

"…"

"I'm not doubting Commander Jin Cheong, but there are some things I don't quite understand about this war. It feels as if everything is going according to a script someone had written. Perhaps…" I stopped.

"Yes?"

"The Republic probably started the war. I'm not certain, but it's highly likely," I continued.

"That's…"

"It's my personal opinion, and I'm thinking about suppressing that thought as much as possible. Even if it's the Republic's fault, I plan on staying on the Republic's side and next to Commander. That won't change, Jin Wing. However…" I paused again.

"Yes?"

"I want to know the truth because I don't want to be dragged out to war without knowing anything. That's the reason why I agreed to Father Bishop's suggestion. I need to know what I'm fighting for. That's what I think," I continued.

"I see…"

“Have you ever doubted the Republic, Jin Wing?” I asked.

“Never, but I don’t think I have ever thought as deeply as you, Miss Karina. Of course, I completely understand how you feel, but thinking too deeply isn't good. Now that I think about it, Commander said he was worried about you because of that,” he told me.

“Really?” I asked.

“Yes. Thinking deeply is a strength, but being too deep into your thoughts is a weakness as well. And because of that personality of yours, he said that you don’t belong on the battlefield…” he answered.

I smiled bitterly. Although it hurt my pride, I completely agreed with those words. That was the reason why I was assigned to a defense army rather than to an assault army. It was also probably the reason I was dispatched to Everia and not Castle Rock.

“It sounds like Commander Jin Cheong is doing well…” I commented.

“But he also said that you’ll shine even brighter here because of your personality,” he added.

“…”

“…”

“*Haha*, that’s good news. It’s great that… he’s thinking about me,” I laughed.

“I’m sure there’s a reason why he told us not to believe Father Lee Ki-Young,” he said.

“Yes, I’m sure of it…”

‘I’m sure there’s a reason.’

“You mentioned earlier about wanting to have a reason to fight, right?” he asked.

“Yes, I did, Jin Wing,” I replied.

“Isn’t it good enough to fight for those who have faith in you?” he asked.

"*Ah*…"

For some reason, I felt like my mind was refreshed and my complicated thoughts were organized all at once, but that wasn't the case. The doubt in my heart was still growing, and my head was still aching. However, I felt like I knew what I needed to do now, and it was to do my best in the task I was given. That was all I had to do.

Regardless, the war was going to happen, and many would die if I made a mistake. A battle between the soldiers of the Republic and the Sacred Democratic Country couldn't be avoided. After all, we had already decided who was the ally and who was the enemy.

"I see… I see…" I commented.

A faint smile appeared on my face, and it was ridiculous how I had forgotten about something so simple. Tactics were effective ways of winning. It was a way to win while minimizing damage to one's allies. What I had to do finally became clear.

"Shall we get going? It has been three hours," I suggested.

"Yes, Miss Karina."

Not long after we started walking, we saw Father Bishop. I was surprised to see Father Lee Ki-Young as well. They were walking together, and of course, he was with his guards, but it was kind of interesting how he seemed really calm. He had slightly small eyes, a sharp nose, and red lips. Overall, he wasn't handsome, but for some reason, his face looked sexy. I saw him smile and saw the innocence on his face as well.

"I've heard a lot about you, Miss Karina. Thank you for making such a difficult decision," Lee Ki-Young said.

"It's fine, Father Lee Ki-Young. Please keep your promise. This conversation…"

"Of course, I won't use it for our propaganda. I don't enjoy… using conversations about god in that way. How about it? I think it's a pity to just part ways like this, so how about we talk…" he suggested.

"It's fine. We'll return right now. I appreciate your kindness, but we're enemies right now. I'll be sure to visit you once this is over. If we don't die… I'll visit you first," I

offered.

“I see. If we don’t die… So you have already made your decision,” he commented.

“…”

“It’s unfortunate… *Hm*… Actually… *Hmm*… It’s really unfortunate. I was hoping we wouldn’t have to fight. I hope you’ll understand the current situation we’re in, Miss Karina,” he added.

“Of course, I understand. Your side and ours. I’ll see you on the battlefield,” I told him.

“I’m not sure if we’ll meet on the battlefield, but anyway… I look forward to it. Goodbye,” he said.

Afterward, he turned around and walked away slowly. Actually, I even heard him talking with someone else.

“Hyung-nim, I came all the way out here like you asked, but I hope that this won’t happen again. My heart was pounding like crazy. Are you okay?” his guard asked.

“Of course, I’m not okay. I just trusted them and you, Deok-Gu,” he replied.

“I’m thankful, but I’m feeling kind of embarrassed. Anyway, let’s hurry back. They might send pursuers after us,” he suggested.

“That won’t happen,” Father Lee Ki-Young said.

“The problem with you is that you trust people too easily,” his guard commented.

I was certain that the guard was the large-framed warrior I saw through the goddess’ mirror. I turned to look at him after feeling a sense of familiarity, but I turned my head away after hearing a voice next to me.

“What should we do, Miss Karina? Should I get the rangers…” Jin Wing asked.

“No, there’s no need for that… We’re going to meet them anyway,” I replied.

“Understood.”

“By the way, did you have a good talk, Father Bishop?” I asked.

“…”

“Father Bishop?” I called out.

“*Ah*… did you call for me?” he asked.

“Yes, how was your conversation with Father Lee Ki-Young…” I repeated.

“It was good. I ended up spending more time with him because he was a better person than I thought. I’m sorry about that,” he answered.

“No, it’s fine.”

“*Hm*… So you’re still thinking about fighting,” Father Bishop commented.

“Yes, we have no choice. I’m sure Father Lee Ki-Young can’t change the situation either since we’re not in the position to compromise,” I explained.

“That’s unfortunate,” he said.

“Did he clear the doubts you had?” I asked.

“I can’t really say he cleared it, but I do feel less frustrated, and I finally have an idea about the kind of person he is and his thoughts. If my eyes didn’t deceive me, then I can say that he’s truly an envoy chosen by the goddess. No, I’m sure of it. He’s a saint chosen by the Goddess of Benigoa,” he answered.

“Is that true?” I questioned.

“Of course…”

“In that case, the incident at Laios…” I muttered.

“There’s no way he was behind it, and he’s not the type of person to do something like that anyway. He couldn’t even lie to me. He was actually worried about the blood that would be spilled… the word ‘saint’ describes him perfectly. Indeed…” he replied.

“We’re… we’re still going to fight,” I told him.

“I see…” he said.

“Thank you for your understanding,” I said.

“…”

“By the way, the thing in your hand.” I pointed out.

“*Ah*, it’s wine,” he said.

“Wine?” I repeated.

“Haven’t you heard of the holy wine exclusive to the high priests of the Sacred Democratic Country? We drank it just now, and this is the leftovers. It’s not poisoned or dangerous, so don’t worry. Would you like to have a drink?” Father Bishop offered.

“No, I…”

“I’m not asking you to get drunk with me, Karina. Just listen to my story for a bit,” he added.

“That’s…”

“I’m sure it’s a very important story for you,” he said.

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1. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 380
FACTS ALWAYS WIN (6)

"I'm sure it's a very important story for you," Father Bishop said.

Naturally, I[1] felt uncomfortable, but I nodded slowly because I needed to find out exactly what they talked about. The Republic had insufficient information about the enemy. The influence of the World Tree that Everia Kingdom possessed and the fact that Father Lee Ki-Young was in Everia was information we had just recently discovered. It would be foolish to think that those were their only hidden cards, so when considering the possibility that they had many cards up their sleeve…

'He could have gotten some information.'

One could guess many things during a small conversation, and if we want to end this war effectively, we had to know the enemy's thoughts.

'Defending isn't our only goal.'

It was a matter of when the war was going to start. The war could start as early as tomorrow, and there was a high chance the war would start the day after tomorrow. We needed to prevent the enemy from reaching Castle Rock, so we had to hold them here for at least five days, and even if they managed to break through, it had to be after Castle Rock was captured.

"We're in an advantageous position."

The walls were strong, and our soldiers were superior. We were in the position to defend, not attack. If we created a long-term battle by centering around distributing the mage's stamina and the priests…

'We won't fall so easily.'

Moments later, I heard a knock, and it was obvious who it was. Father Bishop entered with a slightly complicated look, and I had an idea as to what he was thinking.

'He doesn't want to fight.'

I'm certain of it, and as a priest, it was natural to think that way.

"What did you want to talk about, Father Bishop?" I asked.

"It's nothing much. I'm sure there are many things you want to hear…" he replied.

"You're… right, Father Bishop. We undeniably lack information, and we don't know what kind of cards they have up their sleeves. You have to tell me the conversation you had with him in that tent," I told him.

"It was nothing but a conversation between priests. Even if you heard it, I'm sure you won't get anything out of it because we didn't talk about the war in the first place. We talked about peace, coexistence, and about new beginnings. We also talked about what the goddess truly wanted and the direction the priests had to take in the future. There's a difference in the gods we serve, but the root is the same for all… *Haha*. Father Lee Ki-Young said he was an atheist before coming here. Can you believe it? An atheist… on this continent!" he answered.

"Holy power doesn't really exist in the world where we're from, so there are many atheists like him," I told him.

"I heard there are constant wars on Earth. The interesting part was that many of those wars are caused by religion. Of course, there has been a holy war here, but I'm sure it's nothing compared to what is happening on Earth. I heard many people on Earth are fighting for their beliefs. They're fighting for a god whose existence is unclear, for a god who doesn't even show themselves, and for a god who never sends holy power to their believers…" he continued.

"I'm sure they did, no, I'm sure they're still fighting…" I commented.

"He said he couldn't understand it, but now, he finally understands. Of course, he doesn't understand war outside of that context. He said he understood why people would fight for what they believed in. I think I know why the Goddess of Benigoa and Elune chose him as their envoy. His faith is pure. He's a really pure person," he added.

"What?"

"He's a real priest with pure faith. He's not afraid of the dangers on the path he is

walking on. He doesn't hesitate to fight for the name of god. Not only that, he was even studying the doctrine of Varian—*Hahaha*. I couldn't help but reflect and think: have I ever fought in the name of god? Am I worthy enough to say that I have a holy job? Have I done anything for Varian?" he explained.

"You've done many things, and I'm sure you'll do many things from now on, Father Bishop," I told him.

"No, I haven't… done anything. I haven't done anything for god," he said.

"That's not true," I said.

"Could you open the path?" Father Bishop asked.

"What?"

"You must open the path. They have a cause, but we don't, so we must avoid this fight. There's no reason for the denizens of the Republic to shed their blood in vain. All he wants is for us to be one under the name of the light and to put an end to this chaos by capturing the demon summoner Jin Cheong. We must open the path and head to Castle Rock together," he suggested.

"What did you just say?" I asked.

"I'm telling you that we need to work with them, Yevkarina," he replied.

"What are you talking about, Father Bishop? We're currently at war, and you want us to open the path? That's ridiculous… And you know better than anyone that Commander Jin Cheong isn't that kind of person," I told him.

"I'm talking about possibilities here. If he's really innocent, how come he didn't show himself at the Continental Court and how come he didn't answer the Republic's questions? He *really* is the demon summoner. I saw it with my own eyes," he claimed.

"I think you're drunk. I'll listen to the rest of your story tomorrow. Please return for now," I suggested.

"I'm not talking nonsense, Yevkarina. I saw it with my own eyes! Lee Ki-Young also said that he received a divine order from god! Jin Cheong is the demon summoner, and he must undergo an official religious trial," he shouted.

“I told you that you’re drunk, Father Bishop!” I yelled.

“And I told you that Jin Cheong is the demon summoner! Yevkarina!” he shouted as well.

“If you keep talking nonsense, I’ll bring military law into this,” I threatened.

“…”

“…”

“I’m sorry… it seems like I got worked up a bit…” Father Bishop apologized.

“*Whooo*… it’s fine. I completely understand how you feel…” I said.

“Would you like to have a drink with me?” he asked.

“I’m fine. I’m having a headache, so please return. I will overlook what happened today. No, I’ll pretend that I didn’t hear anything, so please reconsider,” I told him.

“Okay… I will,” he replied.

“I haven’t told you this, but I admire you a lot. I’d like to see you tomorrow with a smile,” I commented.

“…”

At that, Father Bishop slowly walked away, and I noticed how his shoulders sagged. I still had no idea what kind of conversation he had with him.

I bit my lips, and the glass of wine that was on the table unknowingly caught my attention. However, I had no choice but to throw the glass Father Bishop had poured wine into toward the floor. I was frowning because I realized that I had made the wrong decision.

“Shit.”

“You should’ve drank that wine, Yevkarina.”

I turned toward the door where the voice had come from and saw a gray-haired old

man staring at me from the cracked door. His eyes were filled with madness, and he looked hostile. I channeled a spell in response, but the old man charged at me with a dagger in his hand. Fear and shock filled my mind. This wasn't the first time I had experienced something like this, but Father Bishop's unusual behavior made it difficult for me to think of anything else.

"*Ahhh!*"

"You should have drank the wine! The holy wine I offered!" Father Bishop yelled.

"Y-You crazy old man!" I shouted.

"I'm crazy? You think I'm crazy?! You're the one who's crazy. You dirty servant of the demon!" he said.

"What… are you saying?!" I questioned.

"You think we don't know your plans, you demon worshiper! Your plan to summon the demon again at Castle Rock! Do you really think that I don't know about your plan about using all the people there as sacrifices to completely manifest a complete demon? You think I'd fall for your tricks after receiving divine revelation from Varian?!" he yelled again.

"You crazy!"

"I saw it! I saw the future and experienced it firsthand. I saw the Republic turning into a sea of fire through Varian's divine revelation! I know what you bastards are trying to do at Castle Rock! I figured it out, you idiots! I even found out why you're trying to start this war!" he continued.

"Let… let go of me!" I shouted.

"How dare you try to harm Father Lee Ki-Young! He has been chosen by the gods, but you're still trying to harm him?! He's the son of Varian and the chosen envoy! He's not someone a bitch like you would understand!" he yelled.

"Crazy… old man!"

My mind was blank. I struggled, but because of the metal sticking out of my abdomen, it was hard for me to do anything.

“I’m going to fight as well. I’m going to fight to protect the denizens of the Republic and fulfill Varian’s expectations! I’m going to join Father Lee Ki-Young’s cause!” he confessed.

My vision became blurry, but I thought about how I had to remain conscious. I extended my arm out, and I managed to grab an unknown object. I smashed it into Father Bishop’s head, and he fell to the ground after losing his balance. Afterward, I started coughing. I had no idea what was going on, but one thing I was sure of right now was that Father Bishop wasn’t in his right mind. I looked up and saw that his injuries were quickly recovering under the effects of his holy power.

“You’ve finally shown your true colors… you dirty servant of the demon,” Father Bishop said.

“No… I didn’t…” I muttered.

“You dirty bitch!” he yelled.

“I’m not that kind of person!” I screamed.

I smacked his hand away because he was trying to attack me again with his dagger. I felt around and found something hard. I had already lost control of my body due to fear, and because I wanted to survive, I also lost my mind.

“I’m!” I yelled.

“*Ugh!*”

“Not!”

“*Gaah…*”

“The demon’s servant!” I yelled.

“*Guh!*”

“I just want to protect!”

“*Ack!!*”

“The Republic! I just want to protect Commander!”

“You… dir… ty… ser…”

“Die!” I screamed.

“…”

“Die! You traitor!” I screamed again.

“…”

“Dieeeee!!!”

A sticky liquid splashed on my face. I stretched my arm out weakly, and I finally noticed what I was holding. It was a statuette of Varian, and he was covered in blood while holding up a sword and a shield. I had no idea why, but I started laughing uncontrollably upon seeing the bloodied statue.

However, a loud sound interrupted me.

Booooooooom!

Before I could figure out what was going on, a soldier with a pale face came in to make a report.

“Miss Yevkarina! The alliance is gathering toward the… wall—W-What did you…”

“…”

“What did you do?!” the soldier yelled.

I was too exhausted to answer.

‘Commander… was right. He was… right.’

I felt like I could hear his voice echoing in my head.

‘Don’t trust him, Yevkarina. No matter what.’

“I knew it… Commander… he was right…” I muttered.

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1. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 381
HOLY WAR (1)

'It didn't go as planned.'

- Die!

-…

- Die! You traitor!

-…

- Dieeeee!!!

'So bloody… '

Yevkarina looked no different from a servant of a demon as the goddess' mirror displayed her actions. The way she bashed the head of a widely acclaimed priest of the Republic using Varian's statuette made her look like a psychopathic murderer. If someone told me that she was a part of the brigade in her past life, I would have believed it. No, it wasn't just the brigade. She was definitely a servant of demons. I was sure even Belial would applaud in joy at her appearance.

'She's definitely something.'

Her face was covered in blood, her hair was in a mess, and her uniform was covered in blood as well. She was not different from a criminal who had just been caught red-handed. It was kind of different from what I had planned, but this wasn't bad either. However, Father Bishop was useful, so he wasn't supposed to die here.

'Father Bishop got too excited.'

He definitely didn't like the holy wine I gave him. I told him the situation was urgent, but I never imagined that he would move this fast. I refrained from using the Sacred Wine as much as possible because of its side effects.

'It has been a while since I've met someone qualified.'

I didn't want to send him away empty-handed. I was worried, but the results weren't that bad.

Anyway, one of the enemy's commanding officers was beaten to the brink of death, and the soldiers of the Republic entered the assailant's room at the right time. There would definitely be chaos once the news of Father Bishop's brutal beating came to light. It would definitely spread like wildfire. Even if the Republic tried to hide the identity of the demon servant, it didn't really matter since everyone had already seen the truth through the goddess' mirror. As such, I didn't have to do anything else. I could still hear their many voices, and since he was already martyred, it seemed that they had decided to martyrize him properly. I was sure the priests under Father Bishop had already heard the news by now.

'The priests of the Republic are pretty competent.'

It was to the point that I felt dumb for ignoring them, and to be honest, I had my doubts that the priests of the Republic were different from the priests of the Sacred Democratic Country. However, I realized once again that they would do everything for god.

Father Bishop's sacrifice would make the upcoming war a bit easier, and we were also about to get into battle, so the timing wasn't too bad.

I looked outside and saw soldiers preparing for war. I was very eager to fight with them, but the best place for me to stay was in the rear, where I was the safest.

'I need to prepare a speech as well.'

Just then, I heard a knock on the door, and when I walked out cautiously, I saw Elena waiting for me. It felt like it had been a while since I saw her, but I didn't express that to her. Elena seemed worried about Jung Ha-Yan next to me.

We were about to go to war, so I had to be serious. Fortunately, Elena spoke first.

"Probably…"

"Excuse me?" I asked.

“I’m sure you’ll give a lot of courage to the soldiers, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I’m sorry for always giving you burdensome tasks,” she said.

“It’s fine, Miss Elena. I’m embarrassed that you think they’re burdensome tasks because this place has to be protected. This place has basically become my hometown now, so I’m actually thankful that you gave me this position,” I told her.

“Father… Lee Ki-Young,” she called out.

“…”

“…”

“Let’s go, Miss Elena,” I suggested.

“Okay.”

Jung Ha-Yan frowned slightly when she saw Elena blushing, but I didn’t really care because I was still in the middle of recovering, which means everyone was spoiling me.

Walking up to a podium always felt good for me. I looked around and saw nervous but familiar faces. Even the members of the Blue Guild, who had no choice but to participate, seemed kind of nervous as well. Other people seemed resolute, but Yoo Ah-Young seemed pretty nervous since this was her first time participating in a large-scale war. I was kind of surprised to see how calm Lee Chang-Ryeol looked, while both Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung seemed apprehensive.

‘He looks disturbed.’

Of course, Kim Hyun-Sung thought it would be better to prepare even more, but it was now or never. We had to support and reinforce Castle Rock as soon as possible. This wasn’t the time to nitpick everything. I thought about making a trap so that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn’t be able to wait any longer, but I wasn’t confident in that kind of a gamble because I had to ensure that casualties would be at a minimum while we were heading toward Castle Rock.

Anyway, as I climbed the stairs, I got a better view, and as I looked down at the soldiers as the Commander of the Rearguard, I started to feel safe. Of course, I couldn’t show that I felt relieved. This was the start of an important war, and the

majority of the soldiers were probably feeling complicated emotions that I couldn't imagine myself.

I swept my gaze across everyone by turning my head from side to side, and I noticed the soldiers relieving their anxiety in their own way. Some touched their sword or armor, while others prayed. There were some who held their comrade's hand or patted their comrade's shoulder, while others looked at the enemy before them quietly. The one thing they all had in common was that they were waiting for me to talk.

'I do feel pressured.'

I was sure that the minds of just about anyone would go blank at this sight.

I fixed my uniform and spoke, "Cause is the most important thing when it comes to battle."

The start was light, but my voice was serious. The surrounding was extremely quiet, and when I spoke again, I immediately heard my voice.

- That's right, it's the cause. It's important to know why we need to fight, why we must hold up our swords, why we must put our life on the line, and why we must take away precious lives. Knowing and facing it properly is important. We raised our swords. We made the decision to fight, and we're going up against the enemy. I'd like to ask you a question. Why did all of you raise your swords? What's our reason for raising our swords?

Of course, I didn't hear an answer because I wasn't expecting one, but I was sure everyone could understand and feel it.

- Why, why are we here? Why are we facing the horrifying enemy while holding up our swords? Despite knowing that you could lose our lives, why are you standing here with our flag? I'm sure all of you know and have realized it already. This fight! We're fighting for the future! Our cause isn't about who invaded first or who disrupted the order of the continent. Our cause is for the future we will live in and deserve to enjoy.

This was the right thing to say.

- We want a future where all races will prosper! It's a future where the other races

and humans are together in perfect harmony. It's a harmonious future rather than a hostile one. I'm here right now. I—a human who had only stood with the humans for a really long time—I am now standing with you on the battlefield. I'm here to face our common enemy. It is a small step, but it will eventually become a jump. It's an ideal world that we have to achieve together.

Naturally, I glanced over at Elena next to me.

The daughter of Elune scum and the precious catalyst of the Light Bomb Potion smiled quietly and nodded at my remark. I was sure nothing would sound sweeter compared to the remark I had made just now.

'Harmony and balance are great.'

- That future is the future of this continent and the light. We fight for a future where we're together with the light rather than a continent cast in darkness. It's the future where Benigoa, Elune, Varian, and all the lights that exist on the continent live in harmony.

This was important. Up until now, my speeches were brief because I had mentioned the light many times already, but a future with the light was a topic that could be repeated many times. I filled my voice with determination as I looked straight at the soldiers, and the light that enveloped my body was a great bonus. The religious elves must have recalled the light I unleashed during the previous incident because their expressions changed.

- That future is the future of the things we must protect! It is a future where we can have ideas, freedom, critical thinking, and do whatever we want.

This was important as well, and I was sure it would be more like a standard than a regulation, but it was a value that was worth fighting for.

- That future! It's the future for our descendants. It's the future of our descendants who will live on this continent. I'm sure the place our sons will live in won't be a continent full of darkness. The place our daughters will live in won't be a place where humans and other races are pointing their swords at each other. The place our children will live in will be filled with righteous ideas and philosophies. Those are the reason why you're here. You're here because of the future we must protect and the future we are all dreaming about. Some are here

for their friends whom they drink and sing together with, some are here for their loved ones, and others are here for the future where they could be together with god!

'I'll pause here… '

- We're strong!

'I'll yell once.'

- Those with a great cause are strong. An army with a great cause is strong. We will win! In the name of every god on the continent, we will win! We'll win so that each of us can create our own utopia.

'Nice.'

- Let's walk toward the future.

The soldiers took a step forward. They wore determined looks as they grabbed their weapons tightly.

- That step is a step for the future. Let's fight together. For the ideal future that we are all imagining. For our descendants! For everyone living on this continent! Let's move forward!

The soldiers immediately cheered. The dwarves behaved like they usually do, but the elves behaved differently. Many soldiers fixed their helmets upon receiving the signals from the commander of their unit and took another step forward.

- All units! March!

The soldiers poured into the battlefield, and it was definitely a sight to behold.

- Let's go together! Soldiers! Fight for the light!

'Someone sprinkle some light!'

CHAPTER 382
HOLY WAR (2)

I was kind of disappointed because we didn't have VFX that could make the scene look even more enjoyable. I really wanted to create a scene emphasizing the charge of the army of light, but since the transcendent beings weren't showing any reaction, I was sure they were finding it difficult to take sides in situations like this.

'You just have to sprinkle some light, but you won't even do that. I'm disappointed in you, Benigoa!'

I was full of disappointment, but I have never heard of an instance where the transcendent beings above supported a single person or a group. Of course, I was an exception to that, but that was about it.

'It's not bad that we don't have their support… '

In addition, the scene was already good enough because it portrayed us as soldiers of light while they were the demon army. I was satisfied to see that sight, and then I heard Elena's voice.

"…!"

When she cast the spell she was channeling, holy power enveloped our forces.

'Nice!'

I was sure she just cast some kind of buff. I was kind of disappointed by the fact that the Elune scum didn't give her powers, but fortunately, he provided her with the bare minimum.

'That Elune scum is really cheap… '

I expected it the moment he abandoned his daughter, but it was really just like him not to provide any help in this kind of situation.

Anyway, the army of light started becoming influenced by Elena's holy power, but Elena's ears were pointing down. It seemed like she had used the majority of the holy power she possessed, and it was understandable since she used it on all the soldiers.

I nodded and started walking. I wasn't going to stand on the battlefield with her. I was just heading to the control room where Lee Ji-Hye was located because I didn't want to be in a place where arrows could land everywhere.

"Let's go, Ha-Yan. What will you do, Miss Elena?" I asked.

"*Ha, ha…* I'll watch the battle from here. I could help them," Elena answered.

"Please don't overdo it, Miss Elena. This isn't the final battle," I warned.

"Yes, Father. I'll keep that in mind," she said.

'You really don't have to help them… '

It would be difficult for her to use her powers after this battle if she were to exhaust herself and recover for a few hours. In addition, I was pretty sure that she still hadn't completely recovered from the Twisted Demon's Pond incident. I was the type of person who always looked at what would happen afterward, so I knew I had to conserve our energy as much as possible. That was the reason why I didn't give Jung Ha-Yan and our lovely regressor a different mission for this battle. The only thing Jung Ha-Yan had to do was maintain the goddess' mirror with the other mages, and Kim Hyun-Sung was on standby in case of an unexpected accident. I instructed him several times not to jump into battle, so unless there was a twist, I believed that he would listen to me. Of course, we would definitely win this battle quite easily if he were to participate, but I didn't want to reveal our cards so early.

For now, it was enough for him to remain on standby. Moreover, I also told him to take care of the guild members.

'Indeed… '

It was definitely snobbish for me to think that some elves and dwarves were going to die, but that was my honest opinion. I focused my mana on my eyes and saw Kim Hyun-Sung walking around with his sheathed sword. I was sure he was trying to confirm the location of the other guild members.

‘I don’t think I need to worry about him anymore.’

That was one less thing I needed to worry about…

Anyway, I needed to hurry and head to the control room before the siege war started, so I started walking fast and eventually saw a tent. When I entered, I saw Lee Ji-Hye watching the magic hologram along with a few people from the Black Swan Guild, elves, dwarves, and commanders.

‘This is a nice sight.’

Being able to read the flow of the battle in real-time was beneficial. They could see all the soldiers through the large main screen and saw each unit through the other mirrors. Naturally, we set up separate screens for the named members because heroes like Kim Hyun-Sung, the members of the Blue Guild, Elias, and the dwarves had to be taken care of separately since they could significantly influence the battlefield. If this fight were happening in modern times, we wouldn’t have to do this, but we had to do this since fights in modern times were extremely different compared to fights in this continent.

It would be easier to compare it to chess. The soldiers were the pawns, and the other heroes were the bishop, knight, queen, and rook. They all had their own different skills. I knew the pawns could become weapons if used properly, but I couldn’t explain every important aspect of the other pieces. People above epic could do more than move a few squares. They could stand in front of the soldiers and take command to influence the pawns nearby as well as themselves. Just like what was happening right now.

“Iris and Erie. Prepare the spirit magic. We have to cast the defense spell before charging in. The same goes for the other spiritual sorcerers.”

‘Those elf siblings are spiritual sorcerers?’

I couldn’t remember it, but I had a vague grasp of their overall stats. I couldn’t say their stats were enough for them to become part of the Eight Seats, but they were skilled enough to become a named member.

All of a sudden, an alien-looking being appeared on their backs, and I was certain the elves called them spirits.

- Ahhhh!

It started making noises I couldn't understand, but the defense spell that enveloped the soldiers changed. Jung Ha-Yan definitely found it interesting because she was focused on the screen with sparkles in her eyes.

Meanwhile, Lee Ji-Hye started talking, "The spells of the enemy archers and mages are going to fall on us soon. Please cast a defense spell once again."

Her voice filled the control room, and I was sure her voice would spread throughout the battlefield with the help of the goddess' mirror.

'The signal corps will use their own methods to send signals to each of the commanders and heroes.'

Those who had received updates on the situation immediately cast a defense spell before the enemy's magic could fall on them.

'Tactical genius, my ass.'

Of course, the masked scum Jin Cheong wasn't here, but it didn't really matter, even if he was the commander of these soldiers. The geography of this place was vastly different from the geography of the game we had played, so it didn't really matter whether he was a tactical genius or not. What I meant was that no matter how hard he worked, his tactics would not be able to go beyond what he had displayed in that game we played. Our system was different from his, there was no way he was more knowledgeable than us when it came to how the entire army was moving in real-time as well as finding out the detailed situation of each platoon.

The speed at which orders were being delivered from the command center to the battlefield was on a different level as well.

'It's all thanks to the items.'.

The troop command system was using the goddess' mirror, which was a legendary-ranked item. As a result, we had an almost unobstructed view of the battlefield, and we also had an efficient communication system we could use to deliver orders, not just to each platoon but to an individual as well. If we managed to lose this battle despite the technology we had in our hands, I would definitely question Lee Ji-Hye's qualifications.

Meanwhile, our troops had just overcome a difficult situation thanks to the defense spells, and I saw Lee Ji-Hye looking at us.

“Sub Guild Master, and you’re here as well, Miss Ha-Yan.”

“It has been a while, Miss Ji-Hye,” I greeted.

“Indeed…”

“What’s the current situation?” I asked.

“I think you can say that we’re in a good situation. I’m not sure why, but the enemy troops seem confused while our troops look fine. I don’t know what’s influencing them, but I’m thankful because we were able to overcome the danger a bit easier than expected. However, it doesn’t change the fact that we still have to be careful. Is there something you need to tell me?” she asked.

“No, nothing yet. I don’t think it’s that important anyway,” I replied.

“I was touched by your speech, Father Lee Ki-Young,” she commented.

“I’m honored,” I said.

“No, it is my honor,” she said.

“Are you confident in this battle?” I asked.

“You’re asking whether we’ll win or not, right?” she questioned.

“…”

“Perhaps you’re worried about the damages we will incur? I guarantee that we won’t lose. Opp—I mean, Father Lee Ki-Young. You’ve provided me with so many resources, so there is no way I will let you down,” she replied.

‘That’s a good attitude… ’

They weren’t just empty words. She wasn’t as good as the masked scum Jin Cheong, but she was talented in coming up with plans. I couldn’t really understand them because I was ignorant, but it definitely seemed like the army of light was pushing

back the demon army.

“Third unit support. Mr. Elias is on his way.”

‘Nice.’

“The Elune Knights shall stand on the front lines. The priests and mages shall support the knights,” Lee Ji-Hye commanded.

‘Very nice… ’

“Fourth unit shall not climb the wall. You’re on standby,” she continued.

‘That’s it, Ji-Hye noona. That’s what I’m talking about.’

“The mages of the seventh unit will attack the enemies on top of the wall, but the soldiers on top of the wall shall protect any Varian priests who aren’t fighting back,” she added.

‘Yolo!’

The castle wall was starting to fill up with allied forces, and the outskirts of the wall had already collapsed, thanks to the spirits. The enemy was having a hard time dealing with the dwarves, who were pushing them back while holding up their shields, and the dwarves were also moving in a way that maximized their advantages. The enemy couldn’t react properly, and it showed how systematic the forces of the Anti-Religious Coalition were.

‘It’s definitely a sight to behold.’

The other members of the operation looked pretty surprised as they watched the situation with us in the command center. They definitely didn’t expect that things would work out so smoothly. Of course, some of them were still resisting us.

- Stop them! Stop them from climbing up! We can win if we push them back as far as possible.

A man shouted, but the guy died soon afterward after being hit by an arrow.

- *Ahhhhhhh!*

Many of their soldiers were dying…

- *Kghhh.* Save me. Save me…

- Mother. Mo… ther…

- What's the command center doing?! What are the priests… *Cough!*

- Please spare me. Please…

- Support! Support! Priest! Where are the pri—*cough!*

The majority of them died amidst the chaos, but it was understandable. After the Yevkarina incident, I was sure they appointed someone else to replace her, but the newly appointed individual definitely couldn't resolve the chaos. The priests were standing up against them as well, so they were also definitely having a hard time managing the soldiers. Among the many issues, their mentality was probably the biggest issue. There was a reason why I said an army with a cause and reason was stronger than an army without those things earlier. The enemy soldiers were filled with doubt, and they were probably thinking that it was useless for them to hold their swords up under the possible influence of a demon. The majority of them were swinging their swords simply because they wanted to live. Basically, they were finding it difficult to fight while worried about the possibility of them being tricked by a demon.

"As expected, an army with a cause is strong."

I was extremely satisfied to see the army of light beating the demon army.

CHAPTER 383
HOLY WAR (3)

The majority of humans were weak, especially in situations like this. Honestly, ordinary people wouldn't be able to handle situations where they had to kill to live.

'This is why a cause and justification is important… '

The soldiers had to be trained to think in a certain way—whether they would be fighting for god, their nation, or their families—it didn't matter as long as they had that mindset. It was also important to make them think that they were righteous. Fighting to protect and fighting to invade were two different things, and the enemies basically didn't have both.

The commanders in the command center yelled with all their might because of their sense of duty, but the ordinary soldiers couldn't hear them because they had always been stewing in their doubts since the war started. All they could do was shoot arrows out of fear. The soldiers desperately trying to get out of this situation while screaming were in a better situation, and there were a lot of people who gave up on fighting. The more defensive they were, the worse the situation would become for them. The effects and facts they could see with their eyes were that powerful, and the scenes displayed on the goddess' mirror right now were enough to make the soldiers feel even more confused.

- Die!

-…

- Die! You traitor!

-…

- Dieeeeee!!!

The scene where Yevkarina was hitting Father Bishop, the priest admired by the denizens of the Republic, with the statuette of Varian, was the best scene in this

battle. The allied forces were already charging toward them, but the Republic soldiers did nothing but stare at the goddess' mirror. Of course, we deleted the part prior to Yevkarina's beatdown of Father Bishop, but most people only really cared about the outcome rather than the process. The question of why Yevkarina, the demon servant, killed the priests wasn't as important as the scene where she was hitting Father Bishop's head with Varian's statuette. Of course, there were some who thought humans weren't that stupid, but that wasn't always the case if we considered how even modern people would get worked up because of news articles and tabloids. Not only that, the denizens of the Republic weren't used to tabloids, so it was that much more effective.

The battlefield was filled with screams and cries. As Lee Ji-Hye continued giving orders, I looked around quietly and saw the guild members working hard. I was proud to see them working so calmly, and among them, Park Deok-Gu stood out the most because his movements had changed drastically compared to before. He was climbing up the dirt wall while holding his shield, but he wasn't really using his full potential. He would sometimes look around with wide eyes. He seemed to be having a hard time focusing on the battle. In comparison, Yoo Ah-Young next to him seemed to be doing better than him.

- Sunbae, in front of you!

- Hey, I know!

- Save… Save me…

-…

- We have to move. Sunbae! Sunbae! Are you not feeling well?

- It's not that…

- We received an order. The fourth unit has started climbing up… We can start moving now, right?

- Yeah. I think… we should do that…

Park Deok-Gu was hesitating. He was obviously disturbed by the tragedy unfolding on the battlefield because he couldn't take his eyes off of the enemy soldiers who were begging to be spared or calling out for their mothers.

'Sigh… that pig.'

Naturally, I bit my lips because I had never imagined that he would show me such a ridiculous sight. I wasn't expecting him to completely adapt to the situation, but I felt dumb thinking that he would be able to somehow adapt. It was to the point where I started thinking if I should make him retreat because people like him would easily get hit by an arrow because they were distracted. I had always been taking care of him as if he were my son, and I couldn't help but think that he had become a social recluse upon seeing him unable to display his full potential on the battlefield. I started questioning why he was acting like this. I thought about if he had really gotten sick, but an idea I had been ignoring for quite a while now popped into my mind.

'That pig… Does he even have experience?'

I thought about the things we had done together, and no matter how hard I thought about it, I couldn't remember if he had actually killed a human being. I was sure Park Deok-Gu had seen many human deaths from afar, but he had never actually killed someone else with his own hands. I could also remember that Park Deok-Gu's eyes were closed when I killed Yoo Seok-Woo, and in situations like this, Park Deok-Gu would often leave quietly. Of course, he had fought with other humans before, but he had never actually killed people with his own hands.

'I don't think he has ever done it himself.'

I was honestly kind of shocked because those who managed to survive through the tutorial dungeon had to have done it at least once, and if they were unlucky, they would have killed someone in the tutorial dungeon as well. Otherwise, they would definitely kill someone else on the continent. Even if it were a humanoid monster, a criminal, or a thief, the meaning was still the same. At that, I couldn't help but feel dumb because I actually didn't notice that until now.

Park Deok-Gu's heart had to be really soft because I could see him hesitating as he was trying his best to make a move. However, I was sure that there had to be a backstory behind all this.

I cursed under my breath. I was worried about him because I knew our pig's mind was weak and that he had always been hiding that by acting tough.

- Sunbae! Sunbae!

- I-I'm going right now.

- Reinforcements!

- Yeah…

I was getting frustrated because it was so dumb to stand in the middle of the battlefield while hesitating and looking the other way. In the end, I had no other choice but to talk to Lee Ji-Hye.

"Park Deok-Gu and Yoo Ah-Young—"

Before I could finish, Lee Ji-Hye nodded and delivered a new order.

"The seventh unit will leave the battlefield and focus on protecting those who have surrendered and the priests. This is our top priority. The seventh unit will leave the battlefield and focus on protecting those who have surrendered and the priests."

"Order received."

They had to have received the order given to them from the command center because I saw Park Deok-Gu and Yoo Ah-Young talking again.

- Sunbae

- Yeah?

- We have received another order, and it's different from the previous one. They told us to leave the battlefield and protect those who have surrendered and the priests. It's the top priority.

- *Ah*, I see. H-Hurry…

- They have sent us the location. Shall I lead the way?

- No, I should lead.

- Okay.

- Careful!

- Thank you, Sunbae.

Park Deok-Gu seemed a bit happier, but that happiness started to change into anxiety just a few moments later. He seemed to have realized why the command center gave that kind of order all of a sudden. The seventh unit's original goal wasn't to protect the priests. There was another unit in charge of that task, and it was already announced during the briefing earlier. The seventh unit's task was to support the other units that were climbing up the wall. Since we told everyone that we would issue orders while watching them from the goddess' mirror, he was definitely thinking that I had seen him embarrass himself just now.

'It's a relief that he has calmed down, at the very least… '

If the battlefield were intense, I wouldn't have been able to take him out.

It hadn't been that long since the battle started, but the demon army worried about being under the influence of demons were already starting to lose their strength.

'Priests are very important on the battlefield, everyone… '

I wondered if our plan was progressing a bit too smoothly, but…

'Maybe it's inevitable.'

The soldiers blocking the troops of Everia as well as the dirt walls were like empty sweet rice puffs. They were too big to be used as effective tools other than to buy time. In addition, they were actually planning a battle of attrition from the start rather than winning, so they had no reinforcements to back them up.

Honestly, there was no need for me to dig deeper and find out why because the masked scum, Jin Cheong, didn't really have a lot of infantry soldiers because the battlefield was spread out across the entire continent.

'They're not in a comfortable spot either.'

Right now, it was paramount for them to conquer Castle Rock. I wasn't really sure if the masked scum had abandoned the Everia front line. If that wasn't the case, then he could be in a position where he had to make the soldiers fight rather than retreat.

Well, the reason didn't really matter because we just had to enjoy the ride. If the enemy's main command center and the priests were close to each other, then I wouldn't be able to do anything other than watch them conquer Castle Rock. Fortunately, it was the opposite. As such, their blockade of Everia was about to collapse completely. The enemy commander started telling the soldiers to retreat, and the soldiers did that without hesitation. I even saw some soldiers throwing their weapons away and directly surrendering. There were also priests who risked their lives by not participating in battle.

It had been eight hours since the battle started, and the battle was finally coming to an end. As for whether eight hours was long or not, it depended on the individual.

"I'll be heading to the front lines, Miss Ji-Hye," I told her.

"Okay, Father Lee Ki-Young. I'll wrap my task up in the command center…"

"I'll leave the rest to you," I said.

"Okay."

I still haven't announced our victory, but I could already hear loud cheers. Both the commanders and ordinary soldiers could tell that we were going to win this battle. I looked at the battlefield and saw that we had already occupied more land than them. I would have to check the number of our troops later, but the casualties didn't seem to be that much. We could say that we had won a landslide victory.

'How did they climb up this?'

I started walking and eventually arrived at the base of the dirt wall. I knew it would be taller than what I had expected, but I couldn't help but think that I wouldn't be able to climb it up upon approaching it. I kept walking while greeting the nearby soldiers, and I eventually met up with Park Deok-Gu, who had captives and priests with him. He approached me slowly and lowered his head after glancing up at me. What he did seemed meaningless, but he seemed to be scolding himself because he looked sad. I honestly wanted to say something to him, but he wasn't the top priority right now. In addition, I could always criticize and give him some advice later.

Before anything else, I had to know if Yevkarina was still alive. Checking Yevkarina's vital status was originally Father Bishop's task, but he died, so I had to give the task to someone else. If she repented, even though she was a demon servant, then our

propaganda would be incredibly effective. In addition, that masked scum would definitely get hurt after being backstabbed by someone close to him.

I frowned when I heard a dull thud, but I smiled when I saw Lee Chang-Ryeol approaching me quietly.

“Is she still alive?” I asked.

“Yes, Sub Guild Master. She’s still alive,” Kim Chang-Ryeol replied.

“That’s a relief. How’s her condition?” I asked.

“She’s still unconscious. The first aid treatment went well, so her life isn’t in danger. She’ll probably wake up after resting up for a bit,” he answered.

“That’s great. *Ah*, I’d like to see her now. Is she in her room?” I asked.

“Yes…”

Lee Chang-Ryeol immediately led me inside the room, and as expected of a competent person, he performed well. I especially wanted to applaud him for performing first-aid treatment on Yevkarina, and I also liked how he took care of things without me saying it.

I entered the room and saw Father Bishop’s corpse. He definitely died a gruesome death because his head had caved in. On the bed, I saw Yevkarina lying quietly. I poked her cheek, and she looked at me.

“C-Commander?” she muttered.

“Unfortunately, it’s me, Miss Yevkarina. *Hahaha*.” I chuckled.

CHAPTER 384
WINNERS DON'T PAY THE PRICE (1)

"Commander?" Yevkarina muttered.

"Unfortunately, it's me, Miss Yevkarina. *Hahaha*." I chuckled.

It was pretty amusing to see her expression change a few times in the blink of an eye. I was sure she was still out of it because she slowly stretched her hand out. However, she definitely realized that I wasn't Jin Cheong because her expression changed into stupefaction, which was a sight to behold and worthy of remembrance.

'Do I really look like him?'

Our appearance was different, but our frame was similar, so it was understandable. It hadn't been that long since she woke up, so a part of her had to be still in her dreamland. However, it was still ridiculous how she mistook me for Jin Cheong. It was as ridiculous as Kim Hyun-Sung mistaking me for the masked scum.

Anyway, Yevkarina frowned, and it was understandable because she was expecting her commander to be there rather than me smiling at her. It had been a while since I saw that kind of expression after I arrived here on the continent.

Elena did vomit because of me, but there was still a side of her that desired and admired me. However, Yevkarina looked completely different. There wasn't a single drop of kindness on her face, and she was obviously filled with hostility. She looked at me as if I were some trash that she didn't even want to touch. She had an expression much worse than what people would look like after accidentally stepping on dog poop while walking along the road.

I was kind of heartbroken at that, but it didn't put me in a bad mood. If I were on the losing side, I would have been pretty angry, but victors were usually more welcoming than the losers.

'And I'm a hospitable person as well. Yes, indeed.'

"*Hahaha*, your expression is amusing. I don't think I committed that big of a crime. I'm actually the one who saved you, so you can be a bit thankful. Of course, you should thank Mr. Chang-Ryeol first," I started.

"…"

"Why are you looking at me as if you're going to kill me? I'm your savior. I helped you so that you can rest comfortably, and you're receiving special treatment compared to the other prisoners," I continued.

"…"

"It's good manners to answer when someone talks to you, Miss Yevkarina. Don't you agree, Mr. Chang-Ryeol?" I asked.

"Yes, you're right, Sub Guild Master," Lee Chang-Ryeol replied.

"You heard him. Please say something. Perhaps—*hmm,* are you still feeling unwell? Would you like a bottle of healing potion?" I asked.

Naturally, I spoke to her with a warm smile, but she still didn't answer me. To make things worse, she seemed wary of us, so I didn't really think that our relationship was going to improve.

"I think we can become pretty good friends—"

"*Ptooey!*"

I felt something sticky on my face.

"…"

"…"

Lee Chang-Ryeol reached his hand out toward her, but I stopped him. I touched my face and felt her spit. I didn't really need to check it because I wasn't really planning on avoiding her spit.

"You dirty human," Yevkarina scowled.

"*Haha*. There's a saying in Korea that a soft answer turns away wrath… But I guess that doesn't apply in Russia. Of course, the sayings on Earth are pretty useless here, but as someone who was born in a country with a culture of respecting others, I'm kind of surprised. Who else would treat a prisoner of war with such manners? I'm actually kind of sad that you would repay my kindness with your saliva, Miss Yevkarina."

"Shitty bastard," she said.

"So, is the demon summoner Jin Cheong doing well? I haven't seen him since the Laios incident. I actually suffered a lot because of him. I can't tell you the details, but he's also the reason why I'm at Everia Kingdom. My body almost fell apart trying to stop that demon, but—*ah*, you can leave now, Mr. Chang-Ryeol," I ordered.

"Will you be okay?" he asked.

"Yes. Please don't let anyone come here until I'm done handling the situation here," I replied.

"I'll let everyone know, Sub Guild Master," he said.

"Thank you, Mr. Chang-Ryeol."

He seemed kind of worried, but he had to have concluded that I would be safe based on Yevkarina's current condition. I thought the same as well, which was why I told Lee Chang-Ryeol to leave. My stats weren't that high, but I wasn't so weak that I wouldn't be able to suppress a mage who had just woken up. I nodded and saw Lee Chang-Ryeol opening the door. It was only for a brief moment, but I heard the cheers from outside.

- The light has won!

"*AAAHHH!*"

- We achieved this victory together. This is the first step toward coexistence and a leap toward the future. This is the victory of the Goddess of Benigoa and Elune, as well as the victory of the Other Race Alliance.

"*AAAHHH!*"

There had to be some kind of campaign outside because Lee Ji-Hye was speaking. Of course, the battle outside was already over.

I looked back to Yevkarina and saw her bitter face. I was sure she had an idea when she saw me here, but after hearing the noises outside, her mood definitely worsened. She had mixed emotions, and even though unintentional, I really enjoyed seeing that kind of expression on other people's faces.

"I'm sure you can deduce it by the noises, but the battle is over. If things had gone wrong, more blood would have been spilled. If it wasn't for that priest of the Republic—*ah,* Father Bishop lying over there with a broken skull, it would have been more difficult to carry out our plans. Now that I think about it, I forgot to pray for him. He became a martyr for god, after all. He was a good person. My heart is aching because he died in such an unfortunate way," I said.

"…"

"Who could have known that you would beat him up with the statuette of Varian? It was really amazing. Yes, indeed. I even got goosebumps while I was watching how you killed him. I also realized by then that the rumor about the mages of the Republic learning close-range martial art was true. Did you train how to use blunt weapons or something?" I asked.

"…"

"If someone asks you a question, it's only right that you answer them, Miss Yevkarina. *Ah!* By the way, don't think about using the same skill you used on Father Bishop again. Did you flinch just now? *Haha*." I laughed.

"Kill…" she mumbled.

"Kill what? As a priest chosen by the gods, I can't kill a person so easily. You're a demon servant, yes, but your life is as precious as the others. The Goddess of Benigoa is generous to those who repent. Of course, that isn't really the case for Varian…" I explained.

"You really think I'm going to tell you anything?" she questioned.

"Of course, I want the cheap information you have, but that's not what I really want. Before I get to the point, all I want to do is talk. Yes, that's it. How about it, Miss

Yevkarina? What do you think about this war?" I asked.

"…"

"If you don't want to talk, then you can just listen, but it would be nice if we can have a conversation. Don't worry about other things. I won't do something childish like getting information from you and using it as a part of our propaganda," I assured her.

"You fraud. You think I'll believe you?" she remarked.

"I'm not a liar, and I can look up to the Goddess of Benigoa without any shame. I know it's confusing, but if I really were a fraud, do you really think that Elune and the Goddess of Benigoa would have chosen me as their envoy? How dare you call me a fraud when I can't even remember the last time I lied. You must be unafraid of divine punishment. *Ah!* If you were afraid of divine punishment, then you wouldn't have served the demon summoner." I pointed out.

"I know you made everything up. Dirty bastard. The commander is right. I finally know what kind of person you are. You're a hopeless scum. Trusting you even a little bit was my greatest mistake. Are you enjoying this? Does lying to others and playing with them make you feel all high and mighty? You're nothing but a fraud. You're looking down on me right now, yes, but you'll definitely pay for your lies. You disgusting bastard. Remember my words well. You'll definitely pay the price," she warned.

The cold facts she spat struck my heart, catching me off guard. My conscience was pricked as well. Naturally, I talked again because I wanted to continue the conversation.

"I'm kind of sad. I didn't think you'd say something like that."

"Then how should I say it? Did you really think I'd beg for my life to someone like you? Whether you kill me or torture me—"

"I'm not into barbaric things like that. If you're worried about physical pain, you don't have to worry. You won't die, and you won't spend your time in pain," I assured her.

"If you think conciliation will work, you're dealing with the wrong person. You damn fraud. I don't work with beasts," she insulted.

“You keep making painful remarks. I’m still heartbroken by what you said earlier. You’re pretty skilled at hitting people with facts. *Haha*.” I laughed.

“*Ptooey!*”

“*Oops!* You won’t get me the second time around, Miss Karina. I think you should calm down a bit. I told you, didn’t I? I just want to talk. I was hoping we could come to an agreement within six hours. *Hm*… I’m sure you’re not up for this, but I think it’ll make things better if we become a little more open toward each other. Yes, that’s it, Miss Karina. As you said earlier, I’m a shitty fraud,” I confessed.

“You said it yourself, but I’m not even surprised at all. You—”

“You’re completely right. I’m a bastard and a piece of trash. I’m not exactly the type of person who likes justifying things, and I’ll slightly acknowledge the fact that I came off as that kind of person. However, I won’t be paying for anything, Miss Yevkarina,” I told her.

“What?”

“I said I won’t be paying for anything. You’re not young, so you should know how society works. *Haha*. The losers are the ones who will pay the price rather than the winners. I’m here, and you’re there—sitting on the bed while gasping for breath. As for the winner and the loser, it’s pretty obvious, isn’t it?” I asked.

“…”

“Encouraging good and punishing evil is something that only appears in novels. *Ah!* Of course, I’m not saying that I’m going to be the one who’s going to get punished. I just gave you an example to help you understand better since that’s the kind of image you have about me. Do you really think good and evil exist in this type of war? It’s not separating bad people and good people. We just have different ideologies and interests. You know as well that it’s the Republic that started this war,” I continued.

“That’s absurd…” she commented.

“It’s not absurd at all, and I’m sure you know that as well,” I said.

“…”

“You know it, but you still talked about how the Sacred Democratic Country started the war, so you’re a fraud as well. Of course, I’m a bit more wicked than you, but we’re basically the same type of people,” I said.

“S-Stop bullshitting, you crazy bastard!” Yevkarina yelled.

“The people who will pay the price aren't people like me, but those who fall for my words, Miss Karina. I can’t believe you said all those things despite knowing everything. Y-You will pay the price no matter what!” I continued.

“…”

“Engrave this on your mind: the winner will never pay the price. It has always been like that on Earth—where we’re from, and it remains unchanging even on this continent,” I said.

CHAPTER 385
WINNERS DON'T PAY THE PRICE (2)

Yevkarina didn't know what to say because she knew everything. The late Father Bishop knew it as well. I was just reminding her of it. The winners would never pay the price, it didn't matter whether it was on Earth or on this continent. It was a constant that applied everywhere.

'It is indeed.'

There wasn't anything simpler than that. No matter how much we tried to make 'encouraging good and punishing evil' sound good, we would still end up living by the rule I had mentioned earlier. Yevkarina looked as if she agreed with me even though she was biting her lips and glaring at me.

Naturally, I continued talking with a smile. "Am I wrong?"

"…"

"You seem like you don't want to answer, but I'll take that as a positive answer. As I told you just now, we are the same. If you had won this battle, I would have been the one who would pay the price. Thinking about it that way, though, it's a bit disappointing. *Ha*…"

"I'm different from you. Y-you're a piece of trash," Yevkarina remarked.

"Do you hate your own kind?" I asked.

"I'm not a piece of shit like you! You wicked fraud," she insulted.

"It doesn't make me feel good constantly being called a fraud, but it's an undeniable fact that I'm an envoy chosen by the gods, Miss Karina. Holy power doesn't lie. *Haha*. It's also undeniable that Jin Cheong is a demon summoner. I'm not sure what the difference is between our lies that you're getting so worked up about it. You're the same. To boost the soldiers' morale, you lied and fabricated things. In the end, you played along and dragged innocent people onto the battlefield. In some ways, the

executives, including yourself, are more wicked than me. I can give an excuse that I did my thing to protect myself, but all of you don't have a good enough reason to justify your actions. You're the ones who started the fight, prepared for war, and attacked us first. Who's the piece of shit, and who's the liar?" I questioned.

"Stop bullshitting, you scumbag! I'm not talking about the process. I-I'm talking about your tricks. You lack ethical awareness. There's a reason why continental law and war regulations exist. F-Father Bishop isn't that kind of—"

"Are you talking about Father Bishop, whose head you shattered with your amazing skill with blunt weapons? *Oh,* man. In case you misunderstand, I didn't disregard the war regulations. All I did was give him a nice bottle of wine," I interrupted her.

"You know that's not what I—!"

"You know exactly what I'm talking about as well, Yevkarina. I never went against the war regulations. Even if I quietly controlled Father Bishop from behind the scenes, you know that doesn't go against the rules. You're the one trying to justify it. You keep telling yourself that I'm a shitty person to make yourself feel better, and that's why you keep criticizing me," I explained, interrupting her again.

"*Ptooey!*"

"Doing that will make you feel a bit better. If you and I weren't the same kind of people, you wouldn't have participated in this war. You would have stayed deep inside a forest somewhere and studied ethics. In the end, you're no different from the others." I pointed out.

"I did it for the Republic and the Commander!"

"*Ah*…"

"…"

"…"

"So that's what it was. *Hahaha*." I laughed.

"What are you…" Yekarina trailed off.

“So it was true. What you said just now is the truth?” I questioned.

“W-What do you think you’re…”

“Everything I said just now was just a joke, so there’s no need to be confused. I guarantee it. You and I aren’t the same kind of people. I acknowledge it. You don’t make a move based on your own personal interests,” I added.

Yevkarina seemed confused as she looked at me. She was a completely different person from Lee Ji-Hye and me. One’s unique habit and nature wouldn’t always tell me the answer, but she was definitely different from me.

‘You have a strong sense of responsibility.’

She frowned at my sudden change in attitude, and the way she started to look nervous told me that she finally realized her mistake. The logic I used just now was to get her worked up and to figure out her weakness. I had to do it to find a way to control her.

“You’re really amazing. Truly. *Hmmm*, that’s understandable. I think I understand why that demon summoner Jin Cheong appointed you to such a high position. It would’ve been really troublesome if we were in a different situation. You would have minimized the damage to your troops and persevered while gaining the upper hand bit by bit. Your goal wasn’t to win the battle. I think I finally know…” I explained.

“W-What?” she asked blankly.

“I’m not sure if you’re aware, but the demon summoner wasn’t expecting you to win in the first place. He just wanted you to hold off the elves. I’m not sure about this, but he seemed like he wanted to avoid getting into a fight. Basically, he just wanted you to maintain the line until they have conquered Castle Rock,” I replied.

“…”

“And you messed up that mission completely. Your failure is understandable in my eyes because you didn’t know that I was in the Everia Kingdom, but the demon summoner will be pretty disappointed. Why do you look so surprised? I’m sure you’re aware by now that the demon summoner isn’t really expecting much from you. That’s why you didn’t get any reinforcements,” I continued.

There was actually a more complex reason why they didn't get any reinforcements. I was sure that Yevkarina knew that as well, but…

"That's not true. The front lines—"

"I know you didn't have enough soldiers, and you weren't in any situation to come all the way here. It seems like he doesn't think of you as much as you think of him. It's sad. There's nothing more heartbreaking than a one-sided love," I interrupted.

"Do you really think that I'll—"

"Of course, you won't betray him. *Hahaha*. You must be misunderstanding something, Miss Yevkarina. I'm not trying to cause some trivial conflict. Just think of my remark just now as a bad joke, even though it's undeniable that you and this army had already been abandoned. It's a fact, but I will never use lowly methods like that to cause mental issues for other people. As an envoy chosen by the light, it's not how I should act. Yes, it's not how I should act," I said.

"…"

"Why should I suffer when there's a more reasonable method to go about it? Now that we're on the topic, there was something I wanted Father Bishop to do for me. I even prepared a position for him. It's a very important task, but someone shattered the honorable priest's head, so that position is open now. I know you're sad because you have been abandoned, but you still need to work. Don't you agree?" I asked.

"Kill me…" she said.

"Did you even hear what I said?" I asked.

"I don't care, and I don't want to know what kind of shitty thoughts you're having toward me, so just kill me right now," she said.

"Why do you keep me telling me to kill you? You should hear me out," I suggested.

"Kill me! Just kill me!"

"We have a lot of prisoners, Miss Yevkarina. Many people have surrendered. The same goes for the priests of Varian," I started.

“You…”

“It’s a huge problem for us because it’s not exactly a good thing for us to have so many prisoners. They can backstab us at any time, after all. In addition, it would be a lot of work to procure supplies to feed them. I thought about how nice it would have been if they were to disappear, but it’s not really a priest-like idea. I don’t know the details, but I remember how in the Battle of Changping, three hundred thousand soldiers were buried alive despite surrendering. I’m sure the demon summoner knew the possibility of that happening,” I said.

“Bastard…” she commented.

“I’m not that wicked to do something like that, but the situation could change. If something goes wrong, I may have to make a decision while shedding tears,” I added.

“Bastard! And you call yourself human?!” Yevkarina shouted.

“I’m only telling you the possibility, and you know better than I do that I wouldn’t do something crazy like that, Miss Yevkarina. Politically, I’ll lose many things if I were to do such a thing,” I told her.

“Bastard! Piece of shit!” she shouted again.

“I have been chosen by the gods, and it pains me to abandon those trying to repent. If I were to do such a thing, history would not think kindly of me. Most importantly, my conscience will not be able to handle it. However, I’m sure you know it by now, Miss Yevkarina. You know that I never compromise, right?” I asked.

“…”

“I never compromise. My opponents should be the ones who should get out of my way rather than me. I have already made my decision, so it should be you who should compromise. Look into my eyes…” I ordered her.

She tried her best to avoid my gaze as her hatred slowly turned into fear.

“Do you really think that I won’t be able to do it?” I asked.

“…”

“I warned you, Miss Yevkarina. I did. Reject my offer, and I will abandon half of the prisoners. You’ll be executed as a demon servant. Then, I will look for another competent person and make the same offer. If they reject me as well, then I’ll abandon the rest,” I warned her.

“You… People like you…”

“You dragged them here, Miss Yevkarina. We should let them go back home safely. They just got dragged here, and they all have their own families,” I added.

Yevkarina had no choice. I looked straight at her and saw her eyes quivering. I was sure she was thinking about other ways to go around it.

‘I don’t think I need to explain her role… ’

I was sure she was aware of her role all this time.

“Should I make it easier for you to make a decision? I think we should find out whether there are other demon servants among the prisoners. I’m pretty sure that at least a third of the prisoners had been tainted by the demon. We have to hurry and purify them. Yes, we must hurry,” I said.

“W-Wait!” Yevakrina exclaimed.

“Have you made your decision?” I asked.

She couldn’t answer, but she had basically made up her mind because I could see it in her body language. Her eyes were shaking, and she was biting her lips. Thick beads of sweat were rolling down her neck, and her breathing was starting to get rough.

“I won’t compromise,” I growled.

It couldn’t be called the decisive blow, but my growl had to be pretty effective because she nodded without saying anything.

“You made the right choice,” I told her.

“You evil bastard…”

“Hey, that’s blasphemy, Miss Yevkarina.” I pointed out.

However, she seemed to be in too much of a daze to listen to me properly.

CHAPTER 386
WINNERS DON'T PAY THE PRICE (3)

"It's definitely tricky…" Jin Cheong commented.

"Yes, sir. It's even trickier because the castle walls are made to defend against magic. It's the same for the barrier the shaman of the Sacred Democratic Country has cast…" I[1] started.

"Conquering it won't be easy," he said.

"A siege war is the only way. It will be a different story if we can give a strong physical impact, but breaking down a castle wall without a dragon will be difficult. It'll take even longer if they have enough supplies within Castle Rock," I explained.

"I see. How are the allied troops doing?" he asked.

"Despite attempts to break down the wall a few times, the damage is very small. They're trying to save their arrows in the meantime…" I replied.

"Castle Rock is important," he emphasized.

"…"

"However, it's not to the point that we need to use all our resources. The Eastern Front isn't the only way to get to Lindel or the capital. The Celia Front was completely pushed back yesterday, and it's the same for the Dawan Front," he informed.

The Castle Rock Front was a piece of pie everyone wanted. Using such a large and important front as bait was unprecedented, so I couldn't help but acknowledge Commander Jin Cheong's skills upon seeing the big picture he had portrayed that not even the enemies or his allies knew. If someone saw the movement of the troops and the current front on a large map, they would figure out that the Republic was after Castle Rock. Castle Rock had always been a problem for the Republic because it was an impenetrable fortress that not even the Sacred Democratic Country could break

through. Even after all the eastern fronts were captured, no one managed to capture Castle Rock back then. As such, Castle Rock became a historical symbol.

The outcome of our current situation depended on whether we would be able to break through Castle Rock's defenses or not. Of course, Castle Rock was more than a symbol. It was the most important base between the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic, so we would have a huge advantage if we managed to capture it. We placed soldiers at the eastern front, and we also received reports that there were members of the Eight Seats protecting Castle Rock. In addition, the main forces of the Sacred Democratic Country were protecting Castle Rock. They had invested a lot in Castle Rock, which made the other regions of the Sacred Democratic Country follow in their footsteps. Sure, it made Castle Rock even stronger, but the other regions became a bit weaker as a result.

The commander's plan involved discreet reconnaissance, cutting off the enemies' supply lines, and preventing enemy reinforcements from entering Castle Rock. The other regions of the Sacred Democratic Country rushed to support Castle Rock by following the Republic's footsteps because they knew that if we broke through Castle Rock, Lindel would be the next and then the capital.

The ability to manipulate the overall flow of the war so that it would go according to one's plan was an incredible ability to have, and I was pretty confident that things would continue to go smoothly from now on as long as no other variables popped up.

'Yeah, as long as there aren't any other variables.'

However, I couldn't help but recall the situation in Everia. We received news from our forces there before the war started, but we couldn't reach them anymore afterward. As such, the headquarters decided to send a reconnaissance team. I knew they were reacting sensitively because our communication technology wasn't that great, so we couldn't communicate effectively. Of course, we could still receive reports about a certain detachment's current situation, but there was a limit due to the distance.

'The signalman could have been captured, or perhaps they're just too busy. I'm sure it's nothing serious.'

I told myself that, but I was actually nervous as well.

I shook my head and looked sideways to see a man with the same expression as me. Upon seeing that, I couldn't help but talk cautiously, "Y-You don't need to worry, sir. Even if he's at the Everia Front, nothing will change."

I was actually telling that to myself.

"I'm not worried, Katia," said the Commander.

"You don't look so good, sir. The command center believes that they won't be able to break through Everia's front so easily, and I agree with them as well. Father Lee Ki-young, he's nothing but a fraud. You said that he can't do anything other than instigate and deceive people. Of course, I expect things to somewhat change, but unnie won't be defeated so easily," I assured him.

"Yes, I'm aware of that, and I'm trying to think that way," he said.

"I'm… worried as well. I'd be lying if I said I'm not worried. I did try to stop her because of that, but still—I'm sure! I'm sure she understands what you're thinking because she decided to do it on her own. All you need to do is trust her and wait. I'm sure we'll receive good news sooner or later," I continued.

"I should do that. How about you, Katia? How are you doing?" he asked.

"I'm fine. I'm doing okay because I believe my sister will overcome this," I replied.

I was feeling anxious, but…

'I'm sure she'll persevere.'

I knew her better than anyone else, and based on the formation of the troops, it would be difficult for the soldiers of Everia to break through our detachment in the next few days. The Republic had a decent amount of priests, and Father Bishop was with them as well. My sister has always been a kind person, so she couldn't really do cruel things, but I knew my sister better than anyone else, so it wouldn't make sense for her to get defeated so easily. Therefore, it was childish of me to get worried and restless for her.

Our soldiers were still fighting at many different fronts, so I couldn't give special attention to our Everia Front. Everyone was suffering, so I had to be as objective as possible.

'The only thing the Everia Front needs to do is buy us time. Right now, I have to focus on the eastern front more.'

The Western Front requested mage reinforcements, and the Northern Front requested priests. The supply depots were working without any issues, but it was too much to control all the fronts because many troops would inevitably die each day. I was also pretty sure that the Everia Front had to be in chaos right now.

I nodded to myself, but then a member of the command center suddenly entered the room.

"Commander," they said.

"Please speak," Jin Cheong ordered.

"E-Everia…" they started.

"Yes?"

"The Everia Front has fallen. The damages are unknown, but we have received news that the majority of the soldiers have been captured as prisoners, and the enemies are preparing to head over to Castle Rock right now," they answered.

"…"

"…"

"W-What did you just say?" I asked.

"I-It's just as I said, Miss Katia," they replied.

"H-How… It hasn't been that long…" I commented.

"I don't know, but the soldiers who retreated got captured as well, s-so…" they stuttered.

"No way. There's no way! I'm sure there has been a mistake," I yelled.

A sense of foreboding immediately filled my head. I tried to remain calm, but I couldn't because the Everia Front was supposed to be a siege war for the enemies.

The wall we had created was made hastily using magic, but it still wasn't the type of wall that could have fallen so easily. In addition to the number of troops as well as their skill levels, the battle on the Everia Front shouldn't have ended so fast.

"The battle there has already ended? It can't be. I'm sure there has been a mistake. Who delivered the news? Where's the reconnaissance unit who reported the news?" I asked.

"Right now—"

"Bring them here—no, I'll go to them myself. I have to hear from them exactly what they saw for them to say something so ridiculous," I said.

"Miss Katia!"

Naturally, I hurriedly opened the door and saw the surprised looks on the soldiers. However, I didn't have the time to greet them. I hurriedly went over to where the reconnaissance unit was located and saw people gathered around them.

"Where are the rangers? I must hear from them," I asked.

"Please don't come close, Miss Katia."

"What are you talking about?!" I yelled.

"We're currently examining the item we received from the Everia Front. It could be dangerous, so please wait—"

"Move! Right now!" I ordered.

"It could be a cursed artifact. Please—" they warned.

"No! I'll check it myself," I told them.

It was chaotic, and the sense of foreboding in my head intensified. I couldn't think rationally, and my hands were even trembling.

All of a sudden, someone approached me quietly. I noticed them and turned my head to see Commander Jin Cheong next to me. He started talking, and for some reason, his placid voice started to calm my heart down.

“If it’s an artifact, I’ll check it. It’s an order. Please step back.”

“But…!”

“I said it’s an order,” Jin Cheong repeated.

The rangers and mages who could disable traps immediately stepped back. I saw a letter inside the envelope and an unknown device shaped like a stick.

“Commander, this is…”

“It’s not an artifact that can bring harm. This is probably the device they call the goddess’ mirror or magic hologram. It looks like it’s a consumable artifact, so once we activate it, it’ll probably self-destruct once it has served its purpose. I don’t think there are traps or any other magic on it, so don’t worry,” Jin Cheong explained.

I see. If this is a magic hologram, can’t we make use of it as well?” I asked.

“No. We don’t have a control tower that can transmit images. All we can do is simply receive one-sided information. By the way, are you sure this came from the Everia Front?” he asked.

“Yes. To be exact, it was attached to the leg of our messenger. Based on the situation, we believed it was a message sent from Everia…” they replied.

“It’s probably a message. If we use a bit of mana, it should…”

The commander slowly used infused his mana into the device, and a semi-transparent screen appeared above the stick. I saw my sister, Yevkarina, sitting on a bed, and an unfamiliar voice echoed soon afterward.

- *Ahhh*. Can we start now? Are you watching? Are you sure you’re watching?

The man walked slowly and sat next to my sister, and my sister was trembling with her head down while the man playfully smacked her shoulder.

- I hope it reaches them safely. *Ah*… I think we should start off with an introduction. Don’t you agree? How about a simple introduction?

- 33 years old… Yev… Karina.

At that, my mind went blank.

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1. Katia's POV ☜

CHAPTER 387
WINNERS DON'T PAY THE PRICE (4)

My[1] mind went blank. I started breathing heavily, yet I felt as if I was suffocating. It was all because I couldn't believe the sight I was seeing on the magic hologram. The woman on the screen was definitely my sister, and she was trembling with her head down. To make things worse, I could also see that she was crying. I couldn't quite grasp her condition as well. I had no idea how she got into that situation.

The Everia Front had already collapsed, even though it was just the first day. The bastard was playfully smacking my sister's shoulder, so I couldn't help but start doubting the legitimacy of this scene.

'This is definitely fake.'

There was a chance that I said that to myself because I wanted to avoid reality, but I couldn't really think of anything else because all this couldn't be understood with common sense. The only thing I could tell myself was that all this was a lie.

Meanwhile, the man continued talking.

- Thank you for the introduction, Miss Yevkarina, but I don't think that's enough… I think it would be best if you said something that will prove who you really are. I'll ask you a few questions. What do you usually do in your free time?

- I… read.

- That's a bit surprising. How long have you been here?

- Seven years.

- What's your favorite food?

- Stew.

- *Hm*. It's still lacking, but this should be enough to prove that this is real. I'd like to

spend more time like this for those who will be *very* suspicious of this video, but unfortunately, we do not have the time to do that, so we'll stop here. *Ah*, I'm Lee Ki-Young, and I'm 26 years old. My job is God's Envoy, and my hobby is studying theology. My specialty is praying. I'm sure all of you recognize my face. Isn't that right, Yevkarina?

- That's right.

- *Ah*. I'm not sure how many people are watching this, but the scene you'll soon watch could be pretty shocking. If possible, I suggest leaving the room. This message is for the demon summoner Jin Cheong alone. Don't even try to illegally copy this video or move it somewhere else. I'm sure you all know that the control tower that we possess has to authorize every transmission. Playing with the magic hologram is meaningless as well because this artifact is consumable. I'll get straight to the point after ten seconds. As I have mentioned before, what you're about to see could be shocking. The countdown starts now! As for you, Miss Yevkarina, you should get up and start preparing.

At that, the sense of foreboding in my head intensified once more, but before I could say anything, I heard Commander Jin Cheong's voice.

- Ten! Nine! Eight! Seven!

"I'd like everyone to leave the room. This is an order."

"Understood."

"I-I want to watch it as well, Commander. No, I must see it… with my own eyes. Please. Please let me stay," I begged.

"Will you be okay?" he asked.

"Yes," I replied.

I was kind of worried, but I had to watch it. It was something I had to watch for myself and something I had to endure.

- One. Now! Let's begin the conversation.

"Huh?"

- Miss Yevkarina, please sit again. *Haha*. Are you surprised? *Oh, man.* If you really thought I was about to do something strange to Miss Yevkarina, then you have been tricked. I know I look like this, but the gods have chosen me, you know? I reject immoral deeds—no, I am completely against them. I won't harm Miss Yevkarina. Yes, I won't…

-…

- However, I hope only Commander Jin Cheong enjoys this video. It won't do any good if many people are watching it. If others saw the love letter that I discreetly sent over to Commander Jin Cheong, how would that make me look? Well, it doesn't really matter if other people are watching it, but if possible, I recommend watching it by yourself. I'm sure you understand what I mean, and I know what you're thinking. Yes, you're right. I'm kind of bluffing right now.

-…

- I don't like getting caught up in useless gossip, so I installed my own safety device, but even if this video spreads all over the continent, I'd like to say that it won't really harm me.

"Crazy bastard…" I commented.

"…"

I was angry, but he was right. Even if we spread this video all over the continent, it wouldn't be enough to change the public's opinion of him.

- Now, why did I suddenly record and send this to our demon summoner? There are two big reasons. I'm sure there are more reasons if we go into details, but we'll go with two for now. Firstly, I want to tell you that I have Miss Yevkarina with me. Isn't that right?

- Yes.

- Thankfully, Miss Yevkarina has decided to join our Holy Alliance. She had made a very brave decision to repent as a demon servant and fight for the light. Right?

- Yes.

- I think Miss Yevkarina is really worried about you all this time. However, it seems like you have been erased from her mind because we have been enjoying our time together, but apart from that, I'm worried that I may have taken your girlfriend away from you. Of course, that was a joke, so please don't take it seriously. The important thing is that she and I share the same interests, so please keep that in mind. Now, why don't you reveal what your future aspirations are?

-…

- Go ahead. Please tell us.

- I-I…

- Yes?

- I-I want to repent from my mistake of living as a demon servant, and through your kindness, I… was… I was reborn. I-I won't stand with the darkness. I will do my best to chase the demon's power out by standing beneath the light.

- Say it with more conviction!

- I-I have been reborn as part of the light. I'm going to stand on the Goddess of Benigoa's side and take the lead in saving the demons of the Republic!

She wasn't being honest, and I could tell because she was stuttering.

I cautiously turned my head, and the commander definitely reached the same conclusion as me because he was nodding.

- You did well, our Yevkarina. Good job. I'm sure it's difficult to understand, but that is basically what happened. I'm sure you understand very well what I'm talking about. Now that we are done with that, there's only one more reason left. The reason I mentioned earlier was nothing more than an introduction, and personally, I wanted to show off my abilities. It won't really look good to have just one reason when sending something like this, so I had no choice but to create this scene. Of course, I want to make you angry as well.

-…

- This is the official reason. This is a declaration of war. The Republic has declared

war on the Sacred Democratic Country, so I think it's only right for us to answer in kind. This is actually more of a warning, though. The warning is that the alliance will be heading to the heart of the Republic. It's exactly like I said. I'm going to charge into the capital of the Republic along with the members of the other races here.

"That's ridiculous…" I muttered.

- You're probably thinking that it's ridiculous, right? Well, I think so as well, but what can I do? For me, the fastest way to end this war is to go over there. I want to avoid unnecessary sacrifices as much as possible. They're all workers working for god and their own nation, so it's really unfortunate for them to lose their lives. That's why I thought about it for a long time. Eventually, I found that there was no other way other than to make this kind of decision, but what we're about to do isn't really futile. It won't even take twenty days for our troops to reach the heart of the Republic. Yes, exactly 20 days. I'm sure inevitable sacrifices will be made during that time, but it can't be helped if you think of it as a sacrifice for a greater cause.

There was no way the Sacred Democratic Country would abandon Castle Rock. Anyone with a crumb of knowledge about military strategy would be able to see why it was impossible for them to abandon Castle Rock.

- I know you can't believe it, and you're probably thinking that it's a crazy idea and that it's a ridiculous attempt, so I'll repeat myself—I'm going to enter the heart of the Republic. I will turn our forces and cross the Eastern Front immediately. By the time you're watching this, we're probably ready to depart.

"He's bluffing," the commander commented.

- I'm not bluffing.

"He's tricking us. Everything he's saying is bullshit. I know you, Lee Ki-Young," he added.

- It's not a trick, and I'm not bullshitting.

"You're scared right now, and that's why you're saying ridiculous things. Just like the time we played chess, you know you're at a disadvantage, which is why you're spitting out all this nonsense. You know you'll lose if you made a move based on standard war tactics. Do you really think I'll fall for cheap mind tricks like this? Do you really think this war is just a joke? We're not playing rock, paper, scissors. Even if

you tell people you're going to pull out rock, no one will believe you, you fraud," he said.

- I'm not a fraud. I know all of this is difficult to understand, demon summoner. However, I don't compromise in situations like this. The one who needs to get out of the way when we meet is you. I have already warned you that I'm going to charge into the heart of the Republic, and you're going to be there. You're going to send troops to stop me, and you'll have no choice but to pull your troops away from Castle Rock.

"You're the one who has to move out of the way."

- You're the one who has to move out of the way.

"I won't move."

- I'm going to move.

"I know this is all bullshit."

- I'm sure you're feeling nervous because this isn't really the first time.

"That's because I had no idea that you were a damned fraud!" Jin Cheong yelled.

- Being smart doesn't mean you won't get backstabbed. The smarter you are, the higher your chances of getting backstabbed. I know this because I had backstabbed many people before.

"Lee Ki-Young, you bastard! Stop getting on my nerves! You shitty, dirty fraud!"

- Just like the current situation…

"What?" he asked.

- That's all I have to say. Now, I recommend running away as far as you can because this small item will explode exactly five seconds later. Don't put your guard down just because you can use detection-type magic. You should have already caught on to the fact that there are spells that can escape detection spells.

"Commander!" I yelled.

“Shit!”

- Five!

“Now!”

- Four!

“I’ll cast a defensive spell!” I said.

- Three!

“…!”

- Two!

“Come over here!” I told him.

- One!

“Katia!” he called out.

- *Booooooooom!!* Oh, my! Oh, dear! I definitely saw you flinch just now, Commander! Man, our commander is pretty cute! *Hahahaha.* You fell for it again. *Hahahahaha!*

“You…”

- You fell for it again! *Hahahaha!* No spell can escape the detection of detection-type magic! Are you really a mage? *Hahaha!*

“You…”

- And no matter how much mana you infuse into a small catalyst like this, it won’t have much firepower. The only thing it’ll do is *crackle* and break. *Hahaha*. I know I shouldn’t do this, but I can’t help but laugh just imagining you flinch.

“You shitty fraud!”

- Goodbye for now! I’ll see you at the capital, Commander.

“I’ll kill you… I’ll kill you, you bastard…” Jin Cheong mumbled.

- May all your wishes come true. Goodbye—*ah!* There’s one last thing. *Hmmm*… you fell for it again, Commander.

Booooooom!

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1. Katia’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 388
CHEAP MIND GAME (1)

"…"

"*Cough! Cough! Cough!* Commander! Are you okay?" I[1] asked.

"I'm fine. I don't have any injuries. It was just a simple trick. Are you okay, Katia?" Jin Cheong asked.

"*Cough*. I-I'm fine as well," I replied.

I kept coughing because of the smoke, and when the smoke disappeared, I saw the commander frowning. I couldn't help but stare at him because this was my first time seeing him like this. It was obvious why he looked like that because I was feeling the same way. I was unknowingly trembling. Of course, I wasn't just angry at that man, I was also worried for my sister.

'Is she alright? She's fine, right? No, she seemed fine. I'm sure she's okay.'

I was sure he wouldn't cause her serious harm, and even though she seemed really anxious, my sister seemed safe in the magic hologram. She wasn't being treated like an actual prisoner of war, and at least she didn't seem like she was getting tortured. I was nervous, but I felt relieved as well. Now, I just had to focus on the fact that she was still alive. It had to be really obvious that I was worried for my sister because the commander spoke.

"I'm sure Yevkarina is safe."

"Right…" I commented.

"He believes that Yevkarina is a pawn he needs and that he'll gain something through her. He won't kill or harm her in the meantime. However, I'm not sure why she's working with him…" he said.

"My sister isn't that kind of person. He has definitely grasped one of her

weaknesses," I told him.

"I believe in Karina as well. I'm sure that's the case," he agreed.

After talking to him for a bit, I saw people walking near the door to find out what was going on. I wanted to talk more about my sister, but briefing the members of the command center who had just entered was the priority. I knew very well what I should prioritize.

However, I couldn't help but feel kind of sad because Commander Jin Cheong didn't mention Yevkarina in his briefing at all. The only thing that filled his eyes was anger toward Honorary Cardinal Lee Ki-young. I understood why he was angry, but this was the first time I saw him lose his temper. He wasn't like his usual calm self. Of course, he remained calm on the outside, but people would always unknowingly reveal signs of their true emotions. I saw through his feelings through his gaze and rough breathing. They were small signs, but they showed that he was extremely angry. This was the first time I saw that kind of emotion from him, and there was a chance that the commander felt betrayed as well. I could still remember when the commander first heard about the honorary cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country. Back then, the commander seemed like he felt a sense of kinship with the honorary cardinal. Unfortunately, the honorary cardinal cornered him in a ridiculous way after he discovered the honorary cardinal's true identity. I was sure what happened back then really hurt his pride. It was the same with the magic hologram just now. The honorary cardinal had made a fool of the commander and tricked him, which resulted in the commander being extremely angry at the moment.

It was definitely a frustrating experience, but the commander continued with his briefing.

It was an informal briefing, but his explanation was pretty detailed.

I sighed once again while standing among the people who were nodding.

"Are you saying that the army of Everia is currently heading toward the capital of the Republic?" asked one of the people gathered in the room.

"Nothing has been confirmed just yet, and we can't overlook the possibility that the honorary cardinal was just lying. Personally, I think he's lying, but he has always been the type to exaggerate things just to stroke his own ego. I'm pretty sure he

wouldn't have told us ahead of time if he really were heading to the capital," Jin Cheong answered.

Unfortunately, our anxiety wouldn't really change anything. We couldn't just stand by and suck on our thumbs, so I listened intently as the commander spoke some more.

'He has a point.'

What that man had said about heading to the Republic's capital was so ridiculous that I would do my best to stop him if I were on their side. Our fronts were still standing strong, so there was no way they could cross our lines. Therefore, there wasn't even a need to consider if that man had told us the truth. I was sure that the troops of the Everia Kingdom still haven't crossed the front lines.

'It's a crazy thing to do as well.'

If they succeeded and managed to break through our lines, there was no way they could do such a thing without losing many of their troops. As such, it was impossible for them to make such an extreme decision.

"I-I see, sir. Then, what's the meaning behind the video just now…" I asked.

"It's to create confusion. He was just lying to us. Basically, this is nothing more than an act. He just stood in front of the camera like a clown and bluffed to confuse us," Jin Cheong replied.

"An act…" I muttered.

* * *

"It was all an act," I[2] said.

"I'm not sure what you're talking about, Miss Yevkarina," Lee Ki-Young said.

"It was all an act. The way you moved on camera, you weren't moving like your true self," I replied.

"You have never seen who I am before, yet you're talking about my true self. There's nothing more annoying than a stranger acting like they know everything about someone else, Miss Yevkarina. *Ah*, you're not a stranger anymore because we have

gotten pretty close… I'll just say that your remark makes sense," he told me.

"Your exaggerated expression, behavior, and grin as if trying to provoke the commander is all a lie. You purposely made a ridiculous and bold claim to make him think that you're actually going to do it. Is there a need to go that far?" I questioned.

"*Ah*, I think I know what you're talking about. Every animal has their own way of surviving, and there are many beasts on Earth who make themselves look bigger when they're scared. Humans usually learn from nature," he explained.

"The commander will catch on—no, I'm sure he realized it by now," I said.

"Predators don't get tricked because they're stupid. That's not the case, Miss Yevkarina. Acting like you have something up your sleeve is more effective than you think. This example is kind of different, but if you asked a woman whether they would go on a date with a man who looked like a bum or with a man in a nice suit, they would a hundred percent choose the latter. It's natural. Animals usually fall for obvious tricks because humans are animals as well. Making yourself look attractive is pretty effective in attracting people's attention. *Ah*, even if you look at me with disgust, it won't affect me. You're just frowning, after all," he added.

"…"

He was smiling while patting my head, and I felt goosebumps rising throughout my entire body. Unfortunately, I couldn't say anything else. All I could do in this wretched situation was lower my head without saying anything.

'This man isn't stupid.'

The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that he was smart. However, I was sure that the commander knew that as well. After all, the commander had always been skilled in seeing through other people's minds better than anyone else.

The magic hologram just now can't be considered a simple mind game. Lee Ki-Young's dialogue and expressions were provocative throughout the video, making it difficult to look away from him. The way he treated me like an object, the way he behaved like he was some low-life thug, and his ridiculous remarks were all part of his act. He tricked his opponent with a simple lie and made them aware that he could trick them anytime. He confused them by showing off his ability and using a useless

fallacy. The same applied to what seemed like a blank ammo that exploded and the show he had put on before that. All of this was a show to deliver the message that he was heading to the capital of the Republic.

However, it was strange how I felt like I couldn't think of anything else.

'He's like a blank bullet.'

I thought that was the perfect description for him, but to describe him as a mere blank bullet seemed like an underestimation. I couldn't help but think that he was the type of person who would shoot a supposedly blank bullet when it was actually a live bullet.

'I'm sure the commander knows as well. He's probably thinking of the same thing… '

"What are you planning on doing?" I asked.

"Who knows? However, I think you know the answer as well. To be honest, I'm still trying to make a decision. My original goal is to create confusion. I'm sure you know that better than I do, Miss Yevkarina. I'm sure you know what I'm thinking," he replied.

"No, I—"

"You still remember what I said, right, Miss Yevkarina? I told them the same thing. I never compromise, and I wasn't lying when I said that. I had already decided that I'm going to rush for the Republic's capital, and I simply told them the truth. As for how they're going to react? It's entirely up to them," he interrupted.

"…"

"I never compromise. It doesn't matter what kind of choice they're going to make," he added.

* * *

"I won't waver since he's not a soldier or a schemer. He's just a fraud who only knows how to trick others," Commander Jin Cheong said.

I[3] didn't think he was an opponent who was even worthy of those disparaging

words, but after seeing the commander's frown, I started to feel uncomfortable.

'He doesn't want to acknowledge it.'

I couldn't help but think that my assumption was right because Commander Jin Cheong had never been the type to lower his guard or look down on people. He wasn't that kind of person.

"I'm sure Lee Ki-Young knows better than anyone that he's at a disadvantage. I'm not sure if he knows what's going on in Castle Rock, but he definitely knows the overall situation on all fronts. He definitely sent that magic hologram to make us think that he isn't anxious," he continued.

"In that case, Lee Ki-Young is probably after—"

"He definitely wants to push our troops back, especially because he knows that we're about to mount an assault and conquer Castle Rock. I'm sure he's waiting for us to make the first move toward the capital," he answered.

"But, sir, the possibility of them heading to the capital of the Republic isn't completely out of the question. They could be head for the Republic through Laios…" I explained.

"He definitely made that remark with that in mind. It's a trick many people had used before. If he didn't have a way to reach the capital, I'm sure he wouldn't have sent that video to us. Therefore, it's only right for us to assume that he sent that video because he actually has a plan. I believe he made that remark with the Mercenary Queen in mind because she's currently in Laios," I said.

"…"

"He will not abandon Castle Rock," said Jin Cheong.

"What?" I muttered.

"I'm sure that's what he's thinking—no, he won't be able to abandon Castle Rock. He won't be able to abandon Castle Rock because he will have to come and find me eventually," he continued.

"What are you…"

“Yes, that is what I would have thought if I were my past self. He used a simple deception tactic, so what he had said wasn’t even worthy of being heard,” he said.

“…”

“Lee Ki-Young is heading to the capital. I’m sure of it,” he concluded.

* * *

“Then…” I[4] muttered.

“Why are you asking me again when you already know the answer, Miss Yevkarina? We’re going to abandon Castle Rock and head to the Republic’s capital,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“Are you… serious?” I questioned.

“Who knows? Am I lying, or am I being serious? What do you think?” he asked.

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1. Katia’s POV ☜

2. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

3. Katia’s POV ☜

4. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 389
CHEAP MIND GAME (2)

“Lee Ki-Young will head to the capital. I’m sure of it,” Jin Cheong said.

“Really?” I[1] asked.

“He’s a fraud, but he has guts. You would probably understand him better if I said that he knows when to throw the dice. He’ll probably pass through Dawan’s frontline and join the Red Mercenaries in Laios. If he gets lucky, he’ll make a plan to enter the heart of the Republic with the Mercenary Queen. Considering the supplies they have left in Laios, he’s probably thinking that they could reach the capital with those supplies. It’ll be cutting it close, though,” he replied.

“It’s possible, but I just can’t understand why he decided to tell us,” I commented.

“It’s because he probably knows…” said Jin Cheong.

“What…”

“He had probably already caught on to the fact that we’re benefiting from the other fronts by using Castle Rock as bait. That’s why he wants us to pull back the soldiers at Castle Rock. He made that worthless performance give some breathing room to Castle Rock, and we should be happy about it. Since he had done something ridiculous, then Castle Rock’s situation mustn’t be that good,” he explained.

“In that case, will you…”

“The main force will remain at Castle Rock. Rather than doing what the enemy wants us to do, we need to suffocate them as much as we can. Of course, I’ll form a force with a minimum number of soldiers so that we can delay their march to the capital and also make them consume as much of their supplies as possible. It’ll delay our plans a bit, but I’m sure we have plenty of time,” he said.

‘It’s almost a standard plan… ’

We just had to maintain pressure on Castle Rock while immediately going to war against the enemy forces heading for our capital. Once they were sufficiently isolated, then they would have to ration the meager supplies they had, and they would die slowly. It was a reasonable plan to execute, but it didn't mean that there weren't any risks.

'What if the enemy didn't head for the capital?'

If Lee Ki-Young and his army didn't for the Republic's capital, then our forces at Castle Rock would be in an awkward situation.

We still hadn't discussed how we should divide the soldiers, but one-fifth—no, even if we invest one-seventh of the soldiers somewhere else, it wouldn't be a huge risk for us to take. Basically, we were playing a cheap trick by saying that we would use rock only to end up using scissors instead. A few words could sway the entire army, but the commander looked as confident in his decision. However, he wasn't simply confident.

Naturally, I started talking, "Commander."

"Please speak," he said.

"How many soldiers are you planning on sending to the capital?" I asked.

"One-sixth of the entire army," he replied.

"That's…"

"We'll also support them with a large number of supplies. The fight at the capital will last a lot longer than the fight at Castle Rock," he added.

"I'm… not questioning your decision, but if the enemy doesn't head for the capital…" I said.

"Even if they don't, we can still conquer Castle Rock. With the forces we currently have there, it will be more than enough for us to hold out for a long time," he answered.

"How…" I started.

‘Can you be so certain?’

However, I couldn’t ask it in the end.

“You’re wondering how I’m so sure, am I right?” He pointed out.

“I-I’m sorry, Commander,” I apologized.

“The answer is pretty simple,” he started.

“What do you…”

“I received a message. A very helpful message,” he said.

* * *

“Why are you asking me again when you already know the answer, Miss Yevkarina? We’re going to abandon Castle Rock and head to the Republic’s capital,” Lee Ki-Young said.

“Are you… serious?” I[2] questioned.

“Who knows? Am I lying, or am I being serious? What do you think?” he asked.

If I could blast his smiling face with magic, I was sure I would have already done it hundreds of times. Up until now, I never considered myself to be hot-tempered until I met Lee Ki-Young. It was infuriating how he teased and provoked me, and I was sure he knew that as well. I turned my head away and looked elsewhere, but then I saw him leaning his face closer to me.

“*Hm*, I haven’t actually decided on my answer yet, Miss Karina,” Lee Ki-Young started.

“What?” I asked.

“Honestly, I found the answer when I released that video. The performance was just a cheap mind game I showed, just in case. I can’t say that our current army is weak, but I want to win while conserving power as much as possible. Obviously, I don’t want to needlessly shed blood because everyone here is a comrade who stood up for us,” he answered.

“Are you saying you sent that video just in case?” I questioned.

“I just wanted to see their reactions,” he replied.

“That’s… a stupid idea. Making your move after seeing their reaction…”

“I know that it’s dumb to make a move after the Republican troops at the Castle Rock front line made their move. I know it very well. We’re moving a large army. It’s not some small detachment dispatched for a special mission. Moving two steps slower than the enemy is a dumb thing to do, but that’s not what I meant when I said I wanted to see their reactions,” he explained.

“Is that artifact…” I pointed out.

“I didn’t plant a bug. The video of us getting along has been completely disposed of the moment the artifact exploded. If I could peek into that place from here from the start, then I wouldn’t have done something so troublesome as this. *Ugh.* It would be nice if I had a device like that,” he replied.

“Then…”

“I’m not sure if you’ve caught on already, Miss Yevkarina, but I wanted to see your reaction rather than the demon summoner’s reaction,” he said.

“…”

“Well, I’m not sure of this, but smart people would usually manage to find a way out even in desperate situations,” he added.

“…”

“I thought you were definitely going to send them a message, and I was right. Shall we watch the video again? I think we should slowly review the video that you and I recorded. Your fingers and eyes…” he started.

“What are you talking about?” I asked.

“Your fingers, eyes, and legs,” he continued.

- 33 years old… Yev… karina.

“Take a look at your fingers here,” he pointed.

- That’s a bit surprising. How long have you been here?

- Seven years.

“And your pinky finger here,” he said.

- Firstly, I want to tell you that I have Miss Yevkarina with me. Isn’t that right?

“Take a look at your eyes here. I don’t think it’s Morse Code, so I don’t know what kind of code this is, but that’s not important because I’m sure it’s a code or signal used by the Republicans. It could also be a demon language used between demon summoners and demon servants, so as someone chosen by the light, I have no idea what it means. One thing I’m certain of is that you were trying to send a message to the demon summoner,” Lee Ki-Young explained.

“You're imagining things. If you’re trying to get information from me, then you… picked the wrong person. I didn’t send any kind of message,” I told him.

“*Hm*, you may feel that way. You were acting like your usual self, and if you just wanted that moment to pass, you could’ve just done that. However, Miss Yevkarina, my eyes are pretty good. It’s a little better than most people, and I have good observation skills as well. I saw you keep sending messages to the demon summoner, so it seems like you haven’t been fully purified just yet,” he said.

“Nonsense,” I said.

“You think so? We can check to see if it really is nonsense. It will take some time to decipher the codes you sent, and I honestly feel like there’s no need to decipher them. *Ah!* I’m pretty sure about this part. Let me rewind it real quick,” he continued.

- I’m not a fraud. I know all of this is difficult to understand, demon summoner. However, I don’t compromise in situations like this. The one who needs to get out of the way when we meet is you. I have already warned you that I’m going to charge into the heart of the Republic, and you’re going to be there. You’re going to send troops to stop me, and you’ll have no choice but to pull your troops away from Castle Rock.

“Your fingers here as well. Shall we watch it again?”

- I don’t compromise in situations like this.

“You kind of flinched there, Miss Yevkarina. Let’s watch it again…” He pointed out.

- I don’t compromise in situations like this.

“I’ve heard this a lot from somewhere. I recall saying the same thing to you. To be honest, this sentence is one of the values that made me who I am today. Didn’t I say this line about five times already?” he asked.

“…”

“Convincing someone to think that they’re a certain person is a harder task than you think, Miss Yevkarina. You have to put on a useless show, and you also need to behave in a way that fits that particular situation. Now, let me ask you this—what kind of person do you think I am, Miss Yevkarina? I hope you see me as someone who doesn’t compromise. I’ve reminded you about that many times now—*Cough!* Excuse me. I’ll say it again,” he continued.

“…”

“I showed you many times the kind of person I am, but if the message you sent to the demon summoner just now was a message of denial, then I’ll be kind of sad,” he added.

- I don’t compromise in situations like this.

“Your finger here might be saying that there’s definitely a possibility or that it’s worth thinking about. Perhaps Lee Ki-Young is heading for the capital, or perhaps he doesn’t compromise. What do you think about my assumption? It sounds convincing, right?” he asked.

“You’re wrong. You’re completely off,” I replied.

“No, I’m not wrong. I’m not good at interpreting, but I’m sure my assumption is correct. Right now, I’m sure that scum, Jin Cheong, is having a meeting and thanks to your message, he believes we’re heading for the capital. Isn’t it nice to have a reliable friend like you?” he commented.

“Think what you what, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. You’re just nitpicking at useless things. I-It’s

stupid of you to think that me moving my finger will make the Republic move their entire army to Castle Rock. I didn't send them a message, and it's also ridiculous for them to move the army based on a mere assumption. It's nothing but a gamble," I told him.

"I appreciate your nice advice, but I'm not doing this by solely relying on your words, Miss Yevkarina. I believe in the demon summoner, Jin Cheong. I believe he caught on to the signal you sent him during that short message and that he trusts you. Undying friendship! That's what I believe in. Nice!" he exclaimed.

"You're being ridiculous…" I commented.

"I'll be the judge of that, Miss Yevkarina. Now, I'll ask you again. I've told you again and again that I don't compromise, so in this situation, what do you think I'll do next? Will I not compromise and invade the capital? Or will I do the opposite?" he questioned.

"…"

"For you, is Lee Ki-Young an honest person who always keeps his word, or is he a bastard who never fulfills his promises and is always ready to abandon his principles?" he asked.

"…"

"The answer is… the latter! Lee Ki-Young is a bastard who always goes back on his word, and I'm always willing to compromise as well, Miss Yevkarina. *Woof! Woof, woof! Woof! Hahahaha!* Let's go! To Castle Rock!" he started barking and shouting.

"…"

"Let's *gooooo* to Castle Rock! *Woof! Woof! Woof!*"

"B-Bastard," I cursed.

"Do you really think that I'm doing this because I wanted to? There are times when people have to abandon their principles, Miss Yevkarina," he said.

1. Katia’s POV ☜

2. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 390
FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND THE POWER OF FAITH(1)

“Are you enjoying the trip?” Lee Ki-Young asked.

“Bastard…” I[1] cursed.

“You’ll make me sad if you curse at me like that. I did compromise many things for you. Despite being betrayed, don’t the prisoners look fine? If I really were a psychopathic scum, then the prisoners would have long been buried alive. We wouldn’t have taken them to the battlefield with us,” he said.

“…”

“Didn’t I tell you that you’ll play a big part in the side of light as well? *Ah!* Obviously, your role won’t end here. I managed to convince you to work for the light, so it would be a waste to end things here. You’ll continue working hard for us moving forward, so I hope you’re prepared,” he warned.

“You’re making a mistake if you think the commander will be swayed,” I told him.

“Is there a reason for him not to be swayed? He’s human, not a god. Even gods get backstabbed as well, you know? Of course, I’m not an exception to that. Even smart people could make the wrong choice. Like what you did.” He pointed out.

“I don’t want to hear you speak,” I said.

“You can easily make a mistake by trusting the other person. It’s like when a successful businessman gets backstabbed by a close friend until they were bankrupt or when they become someone else’s cosigner. People who look like they’ll never get scammed are the ones who often get destroyed by backstabbers. It’s all because they trust other people too much. Successful people in society and those with special abilities won’t get backstabbed because they’re stupid,” he explained.

“The commander is…”

“I’m sure it’s hard to believe, but even I have three people I trust fully. Actually, there are four of them. I feel stupid for doing that, but it can’t be helped. I’m sure that if I were in Jin Cheong’s position and the person I trusted was captured, I would have believed them as well. I’m sure I’ll have several reasonable suspicions, but I’ll push away those suspicions and… believe them,” he continued.

“…”

“Commander Jin Cheong trusts you, not me, Yevkarina. I’m sure he’ll think about how I’ll make my move, but in the end, you’re the one he trusts. In that sense, this plan will be really meaningful and fun. If…” he paused.

“…”

“If we head toward Castle Rock rather than the capital, what do you think the Republican capital will think of this incident? Will they simply think that they’ve been backstabbed by bastards with no morals? Or will they think that the trustworthy Miss Yevkarina repented and is now serving the light? Aren’t you curious? If the Republic believes the hint you gave them, then I’m sure the Republic will be really shocked if what they thought would happen ended up not happening. It’ll be a serious issue. You’ll be hailed as the greatest traitor in the history of the Republic. Yes, that will happen,” he continued.

“…”

“I know that the respectable figures of the Republic won’t blame you in the end, Miss Yevkarina. Who would be bold enough to blame you? I’m telling you this because I’m nervous and worried. Well, time will tell us the results. Now, let’s go! I think we’re done planning the formation, so all that’s left is for us to make our move,” he added.

“You scummy bastard…!” I cursed.

“I’m sure you’ll enjoy it. The story of the light winning using friendship and the power of faith is a very cliche story, don’t you agree? However, it’s a type of story that is really popular with people. *Pffft!*” he laughed.

* * *

“I received a message. A very helpful message.”

“A message? That’s…”

“It’s a message from Yevkarina. You were right, Katia.”

“W-When did she…”

“The entire time the magic hologram was playing…”

“I-I see. So she did that.”

“Yes, she’s still fighting with us.”

I[2] tightened my fist as I recalled our conversation earlier. I couldn’t help but worry about my sister whenever I recalled her situation. The Everia Front had collapsed completely, and Lee Ki-Young captured her.

However, there was no way we would just sit by and watch.

‘We haven’t given up yet.’

We were in the worst situation possible, but we were still looking for a way out of the quagmire. I nodded when I recalled how my sister sent us a message through the magic hologram and the fact that the commander had caught on to my sister’s message. My sister’s message didn’t really contain that much information, but we still managed to find out the size of their army, the current situation in Everia, and the possibility that Lee Ki-Young was most likely heading to the capital of the Republic. There was a limit to how much information could be expressed through sign language, so we only managed to receive that much information. Still, it was an improvement since we basically had zero information before. Thanks to my sister’s message, we were able to determine the number of troops they would be sending toward the capital.

We created a detachment based on the number of troops the enemy had in Everia, but my sister’s message said that the enemy would leave some troops in Everia. The commander was the same. He decided to leave troops near Castle Rock in case a change occurred, and it was amazing how the commander reorganized our troops in the blink of an eye. He even sent more troops over to the Eastern Front. The commander was truly a skilled strategist. He basically created two detachments in

the blink of an eye. The first detachment would counter the enemy's possible ambush at Castle Rock, while the other would clash against the enemy's army going to the capital. This was still a bit risky, but it couldn't be helped because we had to make sure that our encirclement at Castle Rock would remain airtight while sending troops away to the capital at the same time.

It was a risky plan, yes, but there was one reason why we decisively executed it.

'It's the commander's decision.'

Everyone basically had faith in the commander, and the commander also believed that the remaining troops in Castle Rock would be able to handle the enemy. As such, all we had to do was follow him. The Republic's way of warfare had always been like this, and we obtained great results every time. The entire command center believed in the commander's decision. No one doubted his decision, and he had created a perfect formation as well.

Still, there were people voicing their dissatisfaction. However, it was all because they had no faith in other people aside from the commander.

"We don't have anything to say about the formation itself. I was worried about how they had a lot of spiritual sorcerers, but I'm sure the formation will be enough to stop the enemy, and the issue with the supplies seems perfect as well. *Hm*, I'm worried that the Dawan Front will lose some firepower, but…" Riot paused.

"I'm glad," Jin Cheong commented.

"Of course, it doesn't mean I'm not worried at all," Riot continued.

"Is there something I'm missing?" asked Jin Cheong.

"No, I'm not saying you missed something, but… *Hm*, I don't feel comfortable saying this, but I think it's something you should reconsider," Riot replied.

"Please tell me," he said.

"What… I want to tell you is…" Riot paused.

"…"

“Please think of it as me being cautious. I-I just can’t understand how the Everia Front was destroyed so easily… It’s even harder to understand if we consider the size of the Everia forces Miss Yevkarina had informed us about,” he continued.

“What are you trying to say, Mr. Riot?” Jin Cheong asked.

“I know it’s rude of me to say this when Miss Katia is here, but maybe Miss Yevkarina…” he stopped.

“…”

“We should consider the possibility of Miss Yevkarina having other plans,” he added.

“Are you saying that my sister betrayed us, Mr. Riot?!” I yelled.

“That’s not what I mean, but I don’t think we should ignore the possibility. If we consider the number of priests, the size of the army, and the wall they made at the Everia Front, isn’t it difficult to believe that the enemy defeated them in one day? Miss Yevkarina even said that s-she was now on the Democratic Country’s side… I-I didn’t watch the magic hologram, but she seems to be in a comfortable position despite being a prisoner,” he replied.

“You’re talking as if my sister—no, Miss Yevkarina should’ve been suffering.” I pointed.

“That’s not what I mean, but it’s something we should consider. If we assume that Miss Yevkarina helped the enemy conquer the Everia Front, then it would explain how they were able to conquer it so quickly. Perhaps she started having other thoughts after hearing the enemy’s propaganda, and it led her to make an extreme decision,” Riot explained.

“He’s framing her for a ridiculous reason. This isn’t worth your time, Commander,” I told Jin Cheong.

“But we should consider it at least once, Commander. I don’t want to think this way either, but we have to think about the possibility that she had already changed sides,” he added.

“Do you… really think that my sister would abandon me and join the Democratic Republic?!” I questioned.

“This is not the time to be raising your voice, Miss Katia! I’m just telling the situation the way I see it. And if you think about it, Miss Yevkarina is the commander-in-charge of the Everia Front, so it’s her fault that our forces failed there. You shouldn’t get caught up in your emotions. You should think about it objectively,” said Riot.

“Say that again,” I scowled.

“Stop it,” Riot shrugged.

“…”

The room suddenly became quiet, and I had no choice but to bite my lips at the old man’s remark. It could just be me, but I had a feeling that there was a political reason behind his remark.

‘This cunning old man… ’

Everyone in this room knew that my sister had always spent most of her time with the commander, so it didn’t make sense for her to suddenly turn her back on the Republic. If anything, she would die for the Republic. It was absurd how he hinted that the information my sister gave us could be false. The fact that he brought up his suspicion about my sister betraying the Republic meant that he was thinking about what would happen after the war.

‘How can you talk about betrayal when I’m right here?’

However, the words that came out of the commander’s voice were beyond my expectations.

“Both of you are right, and it’s definitely worthy of being considered.”

“Commander!” I yelled.

“If there’s a possibility of it happening, then we should obviously consider it, and I have also thought many times about Yevkarina changing sides. I’m prepared for a sudden change in the situation, but the possibility of her betraying us is low, and it’s not because I had spent a lot of time with her. If we think about it rationally, it’s very unlikely that she’ll betray us,” Jin Cheong continued.

“*Ah*…”

“She had no contact with the Sacred Democratic Country until recently, and she probably doesn’t have the time nor the luxury to betray the Republic. We still have no idea why the Everia Front collapsed so quickly, but I guarantee that it’s not because she changed sides,” he added.

“But…”

“You don’t have to worry, Mr. Riot. I’m also keeping all possibilities open,” he told him.

“I-I’m sorry for talking about something so absurd,” Riot apologized.

“It’s fine. It’s worth thinking about,” he said.

After they finished their conversation, the commander didn’t mention anything about completely trusting my sister, but when I turned to look at him, I saw his determined face.

‘He believes her.’

As he had mentioned before, I was sure he had considered many possibilities, but it didn’t change the fact that he trusted my sister, and I nodded in joy at that.

‘He trusts her.’

I was sure my sister would repay his trust, and just as I was thinking that way…

“Commander, the enemy forces are moving.”

“Where are they headed?” he asked.

“I-It seems like they’re really headed to the capital,” they replied.

‘Nice.’

“Let’s move.”

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1. Yevkarina’s POV ☜

2. Katia’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 391
FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND THE POWER OF FAITH (2)

“Let’s move,” Jin Cheong ordered.

“Yes, sir.”

“The reorganized unit will move immediately. I’m sure they’ll arrive on time, and our plan to conquer Castle Rock will proceed in exactly two hours,” he added.

“You mean…”

“We’re going to conquer Castle Rock within three days,” he replied.

“Yes, sir.”

“You don’t need to worry, and even if there are variables, we have ways to deal with them. I understand that everyone is tired and exhausted, and I’m sure there are people with doubts and headaches due to this incident, but that’s fine. We’re strong. We won’t get swayed, and we won’t fall easily,” he assured.

“…”

“Let’s get up. It’s time to fight,” he said.

I[1] wasn’t the only one who thought that the atmosphere had changed slightly. My faith in the commander intensified when I saw him with an indescribable look as he spoke quietly. He didn’t say anything new, but his expression and actions encouraged people and the reason I unknowingly felt that way was the trust I saw in his eyes.

‘He believes everyone.’

He believed in not only me but everyone else at the command center, as well as in the soldiers moving with him. It was safe to say that he was confident. He was confident

in the army he had created, and he had confidence in the people he had chosen.

The commander stood up, and the others stood up one by one in response. I wanted to join them at Castle Rock, but I was needed elsewhere.

“Katia,” Jin Cheong called out.

“Yes, sir,” I replied.

“If things look bad, you must return to Castle Rock immediately,” he ordered.

“Yes, Commander,” I said.

“You must keep all possibilities open. All possibilities,” he added.

“Understood.”

“I believe you’ll do well. After we’ve conquered Castle Rock, I’ll make sure I join you,” he said.

I nodded quietly and started walking. I had many thoughts in my head, but I didn’t have time to think deeply about them because it was almost time to leave. Upon leaving the conference room, I immediately heard noises.

“We’re moving right now. Move, move, move! Take the supplies as well! Are we still not done with the preparations?”

“…”

“We have to reach our destination before the sun sets.”

“Are we ready to leave?” I asked

“Yes, t-the preparations are almost complete. We can leave as soon as we complete the final inspection,” a soldier replied.

I nodded and saw the army holding up a banner. Just as I got on the horse that was prepared for me, I started hearing cheers from where the soldiers were gathered. I was sure they were the unit that would participate in the siege of Castle Rock.

‘We have a chance.’

I had no idea how long the siege would last, but the people at Castle Rock were definitely nearing their limits because they had to be almost out of supplies by now. The mana fortifying the castle walls and the stamina of the soldiers were running low. If we took those things into consideration, it was possible for us to conquer Castle Rock today. We had to pull some of our soldiers out, but the forces at Castle Rock were more than enough to maintain the airtight encirclement. The formation we had been maintaining until now was proof of our formation’s effectiveness. Between the Sacred Democratic Country and the Republic, one would have to take a lot of damage. The damage one of us had to sustain could be the definitive end of one side, so we were still under tremendous pressure despite the fact that we had the upper hand.

‘We have to win.’

We couldn’t lose the siege of Castle Rock, and we had to stop the Everia troops from invading the Republic’s capital. It was inevitable that many of our allies would lose their lives. I wasn’t sure if it was just me, but the damp fog spreading throughout the forest made the mood feel even gloomier.

“We’re going to war!” I yelled.

* * *

“Is there really a need to go this far? If things go wrong, not only will Castle Rock be in danger, but Dawan will be in danger as well.” I[2] pointed out.

“Do you really have to complain about it? No use crying over spilled milk,” Yu Ran complained.

“I’m not saying this just to complain, Yu Ran. Castle Rock is at its limit. We were able to hold out because Kasugano Yuno, Park Yeon-Joo, and I were here. It’s because the three members of the Eight Seats are here that we were able to hold out for this long. Lee Ki-Young is talented, yes, but this is basically gambling. They can’t hold out any longer. They won’t be able to maintain the barrier for another day—no, another two days, and it’s the same for Dawan. It’s because you’re there that they still haven’t pushed—”

“Just stop talking. It’s embarrassing for a man to chatter on like that. Do you really

think I don't know that we are all gambling right now? I'm only following all this because I know that this is the only way to change the current situation. Dawan has already fallen, and I know that very well because I was there. It was a time when I felt like it was a waste to invest in soldiers. Those bastards…" Yu Ran interrupted.

"But…"

"No more buts. Hearing you talk like that makes me feel regretful about the fact that I joined hands with you," she added.

"I feel the same way," I commented.

"It's not like you're doubting Lee Ki-Young's abilities either, right?" she asked.

"…"

"The results tell us everything. Everything is going according to Lee Ki-Young's plan. He pulled you out of Castle Rock, and we're currently in Laios. And it's all thanks to that pheromone, whatever potion that he gave that the raging queen calmed down. Even if we're part of the same Eight Seats, he's a hundred times better than us, who just ran away and endured. And…" she paused.

"…"

"Who knew we'd be moving along with the Republican soldiers? Have you ever imagined this happening?" she asked.

"That's why I'm worried," I commented.

"I don't know what happened, but the Republican priests seemed like they had pledged their loyalty to Lee Ki-Young. It's understandable for them to detest the Republic because the Republic has taken the side of a demon summoner," she said.

"You think so?" I asked.

"Don't worry too much. All we need to do is carry out the task we've been given. You have enough mana, right?" she asked.

"Of course," I answered.

“That’s a relief. I was worried that you used it all at Castle Rock, but it looks like you saved some to make your last stand. You haven’t changed at all,” she said.

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” I told her.

All I could do was nod without saying anything because Yu Ran was right. When I got cornered, Lee Ki-Young gave me a way out, and if it weren’t for him, we wouldn’t have been able to carry out a proper siege defense.

‘That competent bastard… ’

He was the type of person that I really didn’t want to be my enemy, and even though I always had that kind of feeling the first time I met him, I became even more sure that I definitely wouldn’t want him as my enemy, the more I got to know him better. Setting aside his personality, he was meticulous and brave. It was shocking how he managed to destroy the Everia Front within a day and turned the Republican priests into allies. It was hard to believe that he changed the status of this war with just a few words.

‘No wonder Miss Cha Hee-Ra was desperate… ’

When I heard rumors that the Mercenary Queen started moving with some rookies, I naturally thought that they were nothing but rumors and that she had just found a new toy to play with. Naturally, I forgot that rumor, and I eventually forgot the Mercenary Queen’s lover as well. However, I was soon reminded of him when the Eight Seats were announced.

‘He’s skilled.’

He was a dragon’s chosen as well as a talented alchemist. However, that was all. If the mage who was always with him were one of the Eight Seats, then he would be more reliable. However, that wasn’t the case, so he was the weakest among the Eight Seats.

He had strong comrades, but he was far from strong. I even questioned and opposed his appointment as one of the Eight Seats because I thought that he only became one of us because of his influence over the Vatican as well as the late emperor, but when I got to know him better, my jaw dropped. It was all because I couldn’t even list all of his achievements.

In the blink of an eye, he turned the Holy Empire of Benigoa into the Sacred

Democratic Country. He even became an honorary cardinal of the Vatican. In addition, he started accepting vagrant foreigners as denizens and imposed policies for the sake of the foreigners. In other words, he created laws and policies with his own vested interests, and no matter how much I thought about it, the policies and laws he had created ended up giving him a ton of benefits.

If my memory was serving me right, then it was about that time when I started getting anxious about him. I didn't really hate him, nor was I being unfriendly to him. There was just this anxiety that sprouted in me.

'He's not some envoy that the gods sent.'

He wasn't innocent or holy like how the Sacred Democratic Country portrayed him. He was actually the opposite. He always moved for his own benefit as well as for the people around him. He used everything around him, and he would whatever means necessary to survive. For me, Lee Ki-Young was evil. I wasn't really sure about it, but the idea was even more reinforced when I thought about how I got out of Castle Rock.

I managed to get out of Castle Rock through a tiny passage only one person could use at a time. Even more shocking was that the passageway led to the black market, which was in ruins. It was a passageway only those familiar with the black market knew, so I managed to escape Castle Rock using it. I found it absurd when I thought about it. He knew about the secret passageway, so it basically meant that he had been the owner of the black market all this time, despite being the respected honorary cardinal of the Sacred Democratic Country's Vatican.

I finally saw the forest that would lead us to the Republic. I walked slowly and eventually saw a familiar face.

"You're the commander of the Republic's Everia Front, right? Have we met before? *Ah*, now that I think about it, I've heard from Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Yevkarina, right? That must've been you," I started.

"You're…" Yevkarina paused.

"Do you know me?" I asked.

"I-I think I know now. I know what he's thinking now. I know… W-Why are you here? You should be at Castle Rock!" she stuttered.

“I just asked you whether you know me or not,” I reminded her.

“Shit… B-Bastard… Bastard! You said you wouldn’t touch the prisoners!” she screamed.

“I’ll ask again. Do you know me or not?” I asked.

“Eight Seats of the Democratic Country… Mist Summoner, Cheon Kwan-Wi,” she replied.

“Correct.”

“What are you… What are you trying to do?” she asked.

“Who knows? I’m just following orders. However, I don’t really feel good about doing things like this. I hope you understand that I have no choice. We’re in a war, after all,” I told her.

“You…”

“How did he manage to come up with something like this? He’s really crazy. *Ah*, Mr. Lee Ki-Young asked me to tell you this—you’re the one who broke your promise first. Anyway, just treat this as something similar to getting bitten by a dog because even I can’t do anything about this situation,” I told her.

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1. Katia’s POV ☜

2. Cheon Kwan-Wi’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 392
FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND THE POWER OF FAITH (3)

“The fog is thick,” I[1] commented.

“How about we take a break, Miss Katia? This area gets foggy at dawn, so enemies could be hiding in ambush here, and it’ll be dangerous for us to continue because we can’t really see. The troops are exhausted as well…” a soldier suggested.

“No, we’ll continue marching, but we’ll move a bit slower. We’re already late. Have you confirmed which side the Everia soldiers are moving toward?” I asked.

“The scout unit is checking, but we haven’t heard back from them. They’re a large army, so we received a report that they passed Laios, but after the fog appeared…” a soldier replied.

“So they are heading toward the Republic,” I commented.

“That’s right.”

“What about Castle Rock?” I asked.

“I haven’t received any message,” they replied.

“We just have to wait for the good news. What about the other units?” I asked.

“It’s the same. We haven’t figured out the enemy's army and their exact location, so we’ve cut off their retreat and supply route for now. We also received information that they saw a dragon,” they answered.

“A dragon…” I repeated.

I grabbed the sword on my waist.

'It's too quiet.'

It felt like the overall situation was going according to how we envisioned it, and even though it was a big area, we were closing in on the enemy soldiers inside. It also felt like we were actually suppressing them. The small number of troops that had been pulled out from the Eastern Front surrounded the entire forest, so I was sure that the enemy was suffocating right now. In addition, the only thing they could do was move forward.

'Because we have already blocked their path of retreat… '

The forest was making me feel anxious for some reason, but I didn't feel anxious because of the fog. It was more like the silence filling every corner of the forest was eerie.

The enemy soldiers had to be roaming around here—no, they had to be running away from their pursuers right now. This was actually the best place for them to hide because they would leave barely any traces due to the terrain, and the fog was thick as well.

The enemies would not be able to break through our encirclement.

At this point, they were just buying time for themselves. I thought about the possibility of guerilla warfare, but I couldn't sense any movements, and they weren't trying to start a fight or spying on us either.

'It's strange.'

I thought about the cards their side had up their sleeves, and I couldn't help but think that it didn't make sense for them to be moving like this.

"Let's stop for a second," I ordered.

For a moment, a bad thought popped into my head, but…

'No, the enemy is here.'

We continued receiving reports about traces of a large group.

"Is something wrong?" a soldier asked.

“Where’s the nearest ally?” I asked.

“The unit Miss Chunwi is leading is nearby. I know they’re coming down from the southwest…” they answered.

“I think we should join them. Actually, let’s wait for them here. We'll set up camp here. Let the soldiers rest. We’ll rest for exactly five hours,” I ordered.

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“Please tell the scout unit to keep tabs on the surroundings. Tell them to report immediately if they find anything strange or other traces,” I added.

“Is there something troubling you, Ma’am?” the soldier asked.

“Yes, there is. I’m not sure if it’s just me, but it feels like the concentration of mana here has increased. Is this place usually filled with fog?” I asked.

“That’s right. It’s not usually as thick as today, but this place is usually foggy,” they answered.

‘It’s strange.’

I wasn’t just imagining it. I felt ticklish, and when I took a deep breath, the air that entered my lungs felt suffocating to the point that I started to feel dizzy. An unknown discomfort filled me, and it wasn’t because of the wet ground and the stuffy air. I looked around and saw that the others were experiencing the same symptoms as me.

At first, I thought it was just because I was anxious, but my body kept telling me that it was uncomfortable.

‘Shit.’

“How frustrating,” I commented unknowingly.

I was surprised that I said that out loud. All of a sudden, there was a loud noise behind me. However, I didn’t pay attention to it because I had long gotten used to that noise.

“What’s going on?” I asked.

“I think a monster appeared,” a soldier replied.

“Is it the eighth one now?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“I recall the monsters in this area being amiable… I’ll deal, no, I’ll take a look at it myself,” I told them.

“There’s no need for that,” the soldier said.

“No, I want to see it for myself,” I said.

I started walking and saw the rearguard surrounding a monster. It was a mid-sized monster with a large frame. The monster had to be really worked up because its eyes were bloodshot. The monster kept roaring and resisting us, but it wasn’t strong enough to deal with a large group of humans—more specifically, a large group of elite soldiers.

An epic-ranked monster wouldn’t be able to deal with our soldiers.

I was about to unsheathe my sword, but a voice interrupted me.

“I’ll deal with it.”

I turned toward the voice and saw the adjutant. For some reason, their eyes were bloodshot. It wasn’t just them. Everyone’s eyes were bloodshot as well.

‘Something is wrong.’

I haven’t noticed it until now, but when I looked around, I started noticing strange things.

The monster eventually let out its death throes and fell to the ground. The adjutant had cut the monster in half, and I turned toward them before saying, “Please examine the monsters we have captured, and the monsters we will encounter from now on should be captured immediately. You must examine them and see what kind of spell or curse is influencing them. Check on the soldiers and see if there are any issues with their mental or physical health as well as the food and water we’re drinking.”

“There aren’t any traces of spells or curses. The water and supplies seem fine as well…” replied the adjutant.

“Alchemy. Is there a mage in the unit who’s knowledgeable in alchemy? It doesn’t matter who it is. Please make them examine the monster as soon as possible and as fast as possible,” I requested.

“Yes, Ma’am,” they replied.

‘Something is strange.’

I could feel a subtle change in my body. It wasn’t that much of a change, but it wasn’t something I could overlook. When I recalled how Lee Ki-Young was a talented alchemist, my anxiety shot to the roof because we could have fallen into a trap. It was possible that the enemy troops were targeting the detachment of soldiers heading for the capital and decided to set up a trap for the latter. However, even with that assumption, there were still many things that were unclear.

‘Would they actually abandon Castle Rock just to target a detachment?’

It didn’t make sense because the enemy was currently in a desperate situation. The siege of Castle Rock had just started a while ago, and once that was over, the main unit would head to the capital. There was no way the enemy didn’t know that. This was a race against time. If they wanted to make us suffer an equivalent amount of damage, then they would have to inflict a pretty deep wound on the Republic. Moreover, buying time by wiping out their soldiers was something we should be doing. They knew better than anyone that they would be at a disadvantage the more they dragged this war out.

The behavior of the enemy inside this forest made it feel like they wanted us to stay in this forest. It felt like they were trying to stop us. When I put together the small hints they left, I could see that it was creating a bigger picture.

‘There’s too many of them to say that they’re just bait.’

There were a lot of them, and if I were to exaggerate a little, the force was big enough to go up against our main force. It was even more applicable when I thought about how competent the people they chose to be a part of their forces here. Even though we still had no idea of their exact number, it didn’t make sense that they would use this large force that could fight in a siege just to delay the movement of a mere

detachment.

'What are they up to? What… '

"Excuse me, Miss Katia."

"Yes?" I answered.

However, a hole suddenly appeared on the forehead of the mage in front of me.

"I…"

"…"

"Prepare for battle!" I yelled.

"Prepare for *battleeee!*"

I heard a loud noise before the mage's corpse landed on the ground.

"Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle!!!"

"Where did the arrow come from?" I asked.

"From the northeast. The northeast!" the soldier yelled.

"Prepare for battle right away. Get into formation and create a special unit and order them to find the exact location of the enemy troops," I ordered.

"Yes, Ma'am."

Another arrow flew and pierced a soldier.

"Shit, how? We must move fast. Tell the soldiers to move back and head in the opposite direction. We must send as many signals as possible so that the soldiers won't get lost. They have to keep moving as fast as possible!" I commanded.

"Retreat! Retreat!"

"I'll cast shield magic to stop their second wave—"

"*Aaaahhh!*"

"*Ah!*"

"D-Die! You dirty servants of the demon!"

"You bastards!"

"I'll purify you! You dirty demons!"

'Shit.'

I heard a scream beside me, and even though I had no idea where the enemies were coming from, I could feel our formation falling apart as time went on.

'This is bad.'

Even if we had more soldiers, no competent commander alive would fight in a place as foggy as this.

"Maintain formation! Maintain formation! Don't break formation. Maintain close formation using shields and stay in line! Don't fall out of line!"

"Gather! Hurry up and gather!"

"*Aaaahhh!*"

Naturally, I stomped in frustration when I heard the screams. When I drew my sword, a man emerged from the white fog next to me. His eyes were bloodshot, and he was drooling as well. His grotesque, distorted face made him look like a horror movie villain, and the way he charged at me with his dagger filled me with fear.

"Dirty demons! *Heuuuuuk!* Die! Die!"

"What?"

"You bastards, *hehehe!* Do you really think that we'll just let you live?! You dirty bastards! G-God will not forgive you!"

"Y-You crazy…" I stuttered.

"*Dieeeeeeeee!*"

"Bastard!"

I swung my sword and saw the man collapse as his head went flying.

"W-What the? What's… this…?"

I couldn't pull myself together due to the screams from all over the place. In addition, the noises and screams were only getting louder.

"What is this?"

The outfit of the man whose head I had just severed caught my attention.

"Varian's followers…"

I was sure it was the same uniform worn by the priests of the Republic.

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1. Katia's POV ☜

CHAPTER 393
FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND THE POWER OF FAITH (4)

'What the hell is going on?"

Obviously, I[1] was surprised because I had no idea why a priest of the Republic was charging at me while foaming at the mouth. I looked around, but I couldn't see anything else because of the thick fog. I focused my mana on my eyes, but it didn't change anything. There was confusion everywhere.

"A trap! It's a trap! Stay close!"

"Aaaahhh!"

"Stay close so that we can defend ourselves! Don't fall out!"

'Where?'

I heard a loud voice, but I wasn't sure where we should group up because the entire place was filled with fog. The only thing I was certain of was that the enemy and the allies were mixed together, and that was when I realized that the fog that surrounded our troops was kind of different. The fog seemed like it was suppressing our bodies, and the bad feeling I was getting from it had become completely different from before.

'There's a high concentration of mana here.'

Up until now, I couldn't feel any traces that the concentrated mana here was artificial. However, it became clear that the fog surrounding us had been created by someone, and it made us feel like we were inside a dungeon.

'Is it magic?'

I thought of one person who could do something like this on the enemy camp, but he

shouldn't be here. It wouldn't make sense for that Mist Summoner to be here because he should be defending Castle Rock. There was no way the enemy would be able to casually pull a named member out of Castle Rock while it was being surrounded. In all honesty, I couldn't even begin to comprehend how he could escape Castle Rock. Castle Rock was currently being surrounded by our allied forces to the point that not even an ant would be able to come out of that place. In addition, there was no way we wouldn't notice if some of the stronger people in Castle Rock managed to escape.

I was out of breath, and I started to feel dizzy. My mind was telling me to judge the situation objectively, but it was getting difficult for me to make a reasonable decision. I honestly didn't need to think hard about it because the most important thing right now was overcoming this situation. Unfortunately, my mind was filled with complicated thoughts, so I couldn't think about anything else.

"You dirty demon! *Hehehe!* Dirty *demooooooon!!!*"

I saw how they were swinging their swords randomly, and I couldn't help but think that they weren't in their right minds. I swung my sword in response to an attack, and my face was instantly splattered with blood. The intestines of my opponent started spilling out of his gut, but he still kept on screaming.

"*Ahhhhh!*"

Someone else was charging at me again, and I was reminded of a zombie when I saw them foaming at the mouth. I bit my lips and cut their head off, making them fall to the ground. The person charging from my flank met the same fate. I swung my sword once again, and they fell to the ground after releasing a short scream.

I could feel someone else emerging from the fog behind me. I abruptly turned around and was about to attack them with my sword, but I stopped upon hearing their voice.

"It's me! It's me, Miss Katia!"

"M-Mishika!" I called out.

"There you are," he said.

"The others—no, were you able to figure out the current situation?" I asked.

“I-I’m sorry. I wasn’t able to find out what is going on right now. I somehow ended up in this place as well. B-By the way, I think it’s best if you cover your nose and mouth. I’m not sure if you’ve caught on, but…” he paused.

“Are you talking about the mist?” I asked.

“Yes. I’m sure Cheon Kwan-Wi is behind this since he’s the only one who can cover an entire forest with fog. I’m not sure how he was able to escape from Castle Rock, but I’m sure this is his doing. He probably used a catalyst on top of the natural fog here and used his magic to cover it up, but strangely enough, the mana concentration is very high. Moreover…” he explained.

“Have you found out anything else?” I asked.

“I’m not certain of this, but…” Mishika trailed off.

“Please don’t worry about it and tell me,” I told him.

“I-It’s just an assumption, but I think there’s a special type of potion included in this mist magic, or it could be a curse. I’m not sure, but… a priest’s purification spell isn’t working, so it’s highly likely that another method was used,” he answered.

“Go to hell!! *Hehehe!*”

“Careful!” I screamed.

“T-Thank you, Miss Katia,” he said.

“Please continue. I’ll clear the path,” I told him.

“Okay.”

“What did you mean by another method?” I asked.

“You can think of it as a type of potion created through alchemy. I haven’t figured out the exact effects, but it’s a potion that makes people experience some kind of hallucination as well as making them easily stimulated and worked up. One thing I’m sure of is that the more a person gets exposed to this fog, the more they would get affected by it, and the monster the unit had encountered earlier was likely affected by this fog. As I mentioned before, all of this is my personal assumption. A priest’s

purification spell isn't working, so that's the only possibility I can think of… I'm sorry I can't be of much help," he answered.

"No, that was very helpful. I'm sure it's very close to your assumption. It isn't that effective to me, but even my body has been sending me signals, and this is different from mind magic. If magic like that exists, I'm sure the effect won't last that long. The lower your resistance, the quicker it will affect you, and I'm sure the same applies to the duration," I explained.

"You're right. The lower your mana or stamina, the more fatal it will be for you. It's highly likely that Cheon Kwan-Wi used a potion Lee Ki-Young had created to materialize this fog…" Mishika continued.

"It's a possibility," I commented.

"That's all I came up with so far, M-Miss Katia. What do you plan on doing now?" she asked.

"We'll need to reorganize the troops. I want the mages to do whatever they can to get rid of this fog. That's the first step. There aren't any other solutions," I answered.

"Got it."

"Let's move a bit faster. Mishika, stay right behind me," I ordered him.

"Okay!"

It wasn't a great achievement, but I finally knew how this happened and what was going on. The problem was what I should do afterward. The biggest issue was figuring out how to overcome this absurd situation.

"Die! Die! Die! I won't forgive the followers of Varian!"

"L-Let go of me!"

"Bastards! Bastards! Die! You crazy bastards!"

"You guys are the ones who are going to die. You cursed demon followers!"

The sight I saw the more we broke through the fog was absurd. There were people

wielding weapons surrounding one soldier and continuously stabbing them. Meanwhile, there were other people crushing the soldiers' faces with their hands.

Of course, I wanted to save them, but the problem was that I couldn't differentiate allies from foes. The enemies weren't just wearing Varian's priest uniform. In fact, some of them were even wearing the Republic's military uniform, complete with badges and all.

Moreover, there were civilians among the group, so differentiating the allies from the enemies was meaningless. Unfortunately, the situation got increasingly worse as time went on.

"*Dieeeeeeeee!*"

"I'm an ally! An ally! Don't attack me!"

"Die! Go away! Don't come near me! No one. No one will come near me! You bastards!"

"You crazy bitch!"

"Don't come near *meeeeee!*"

"Group up! Group up!"

"Close formation! Maintain close formation! Close formation!"

"Don't come near me! You crazy bastards! *Ahhhhh!*"

"God will punish all of you!"

"You dirty demon bastards! Disappear! Die!! The Goddess of Benigoa and Varian will be with us. You'll receive divine punishment!"

"Die! Kill them all!"

"I'm an ally! Don't attack me. *Ahhhhh!*"

"I'm an ally! An ally! Gabe! It's me!"

"*Ahhhhhhhhh!*"

'Shit… '

"Shit…"

'Shit!'

"Miss Katia."

"Hold on tight. I'm sure the rearguard is maintaining their formation around the mage," I told him.

"O-Okay."

Hell was the best word to describe this situation. There was blood everywhere, and the sticky ground gave off a disgusting smell. My body and hair were getting wet from the sweat. The incessant screams assaulting my ears, and the cries of people screaming for help were getting carved in my mind.

The more I breathed, the dizzier I became. I was sure my eyes had already turned bloodshot. I finally realized that the drug was affecting me, and I obviously wasn't the only one being affected.

The deranged allied soldiers couldn't tell which people were their allies, and I was sure that the people a bit far from them looked like enemies in their eyes. There were allied soldiers inadvertently hitting their allies while haphazardly swinging their swords out of fear. A few soldiers suffered brutal deaths due to their crazed swinging.

Time went on, and the forest became filled with nothing but madness. This place could no longer be considered a battlefield as nothing else could be heard from here aside from the screams and the maniacal laughter of the crazed soldiers.

'What are we even fighting against? What in the world… '

"Die!"

"Save… Save me… Save!! Not me, it's not me! *Gaaaaaah!*"

“How dare you look down on the Republic…”

“Don’t do this. Don’t come near me! It’s my fault. This is all my fault, so don’t come close to me. Please don’t do this. I—”

“Please save me. Please. Mom—”

“Die! Die… *Heuuuuk!*”

“Dieeeeeeeeeeee!!!”

‘Save me.’

“…”

‘Save me. Katia… save me. Rescue… me.’

“Sis…”

Setting the fog aside, I felt like my vision was getting worse, and I started hallucinating. I continued swinging my sword and saw that the faces of the deceased soldiers on the ground had turned demonic.

‘I’m hallucinating.’

I was aware of it, but my mind was getting tired of fighting. It felt like someone had cast a spell—no, a curse on me.

“Mishika… are you following me?” I asked.

I looked back, but the man with glasses had unknowingly vanished behind me. I bit my lips, but it wasn’t going to change anything. In addition, it was practically impossible to find him.

“Miss Katia!”

I turned in the direction where the voice had come from and saw a large monster.

“N-Now…”

“Die…”

“What?”

“Die… Die! You monster!”

“What do you—*Cough*.”

The monster’s head fell to the ground in the blink of an eye, but when I opened my eyes, the head of a soldier whose name was unknown to me was rolling on the ground.

It was getting harder to breathe, and the fear of the unknown started to fill me up as I frowned while walking. Everything around me had turned red, and it felt like everything around me was spinning. Tears started to fill my eyes. I just couldn’t quite grasp what was going on.

I bit my lips, but I had never been in a situation like this before, and I had never felt these emotions before as well.

Unfortunately, the unfamiliar situation kept on pushing me into a corner.

‘Save me… Katia.’

“You must be purified! Purification is the only way!”

‘Katia.’

“You’ll receive salvation. The salvation of light! The army of light will chase you out!”

‘Save me, Katia!’

“The salvation of light!”

“Shut up! Shut up! Shut uuuuuuuuuuup!!!”

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1. Katia’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 394
FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, AND THE POWER OF FAITH (5)

- I'm not sure if this is the right way to use this since it's my first time using a device like this. Anyway, I'll[1] give my report. The situation is almost over. The enemy's main unit is in chaos, and the part about capturing the main figure—*hm*, I can't guarantee that it's possible, but I'll do my best. I'm planning on sending them to Castle Rock as soon as we're ready. I'm not sure if they'll arrive on time, but that's something you need to worry about, not me. The battle there will take a long time, so it probably won't be a problem.

"I think that things are going as planned. It would've been nice if they provided a reference image or something. They're really slow-witted. They just said what they needed to say and ended their report," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

- I'll tell you the overall situation since I'm sure you're curious about that.

"*Ah*, looks like it's here."

- You'll be saved by the light! Who dares! Who dares to talk about demons?!

- *Cough… Ahhhhhhh!*

- *Bleeeeeeck…*

- Shut up! You dirty puppets of the Democratic Country!

- I'm an ally! Don't attack! I'm on your side! Stop! *Ahhhhhh!*

- You dirty servants of the demon! You demons will be cursed! Varian won't forgive you! You'll suffer forever, even after you die and fall into hell!

- You crazy cultist bastards! Die! Dieee!

- The followers of God… Die… Even if I… die, I'll still fight…

"…"

"…"

"It's worse than I thought," she said.

"You're right," I said in agreement.

- That's all I have to report. As you said, I'm going to dispose of this right after I send it, and she also said that she has something she needs to tell you. I told her no, but you know her better than I do, so I hope you understand.

- O-Oppa. You're doing well, right? I-I'm doing fine. Miss Sora is doing fine as well. It has already been two days since I saw seen you. T-Two days! I-I miss you. *Hiccup*. I really miss you, and I'm worried if you're doing well… Y-You're doing well, right? Make sure you don't skip any meals and make sure to receive treatment every day. You have to! I'll finish up here as fast as possible and come back. Please wait for me! *Mwa! Mwa! Mwaaa!*

"…"

"…"

- I-I love you. *Hehe*.

"*Bleck.* I saw something I shouldn't have," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Don't be like that. She's actually pretty cute," I commented.

"It's true that she's cute, but as a woman, she doesn't look *that* cute. Other girls do that, too. Want me to show you what real cuteness is?" she asked.

"No… I don't think the word *cute* really fits you," I declined.

“Aren’t I cuter than her appearance-wise? I think I’m more petite and cuter than Miss Ha-Yan. It’s kind of hard to call her cute because she has volume. No matter how you look at her, I’m cuter than her. Actually, Miss Ha-Yan’s appearance is a distraction—wait, why do you keep picking your ear when I’m talking? Are you ignoring me?” she questioned.

“No, I’m not. My ears are itchy,” I replied.

“Someone has to be talking behind your back. Well, you do go around doing bad things, so it’s not strange for that to happen,” she commented.

“That’s pretty mean, noona,” I told her.

“I’m not wrong. *Pffft!* You were especially cruel this time. You know it as well, right? You’ll have to make sure the ones dispatched to that mission will keep their mouths shut. But if it becomes known to the people, then I’ll take responsibility. However, I hope it doesn’t end up damaging our reputation. We’re a holy army, right?” she said.

“Of course. We are holy, but you don’t have to worry about that. It will be covered up as an unfortunate accident, and isn’t it funny to talk about ethics on a battlefield where people kill and get killed?” I asked.

“According to Continental Law, curses or spells that will mess with people’s mind is prohibited in war. It’s the same for black magic.” Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

“It’s neither a curse nor a spell, so I’m safe. And the Sacred Democratic Country isn’t the side using black magic, so we’re safe,” I told her.

“You’re good at finding loopholes,” she commented.

“I’ll take that as a compliment,” I said.

I saw Lee Ji-Hye clapping exaggeratedly. She was admiring my personality, but it was basically the pot calling the kettle black. It was amusing how she talked about conscience when she had eagerly participated in my plans. In addition, she even voluntarily took care of the smallest details. Of course, she wasn’t really being serious. She was just teasing me, so it was clear that she was in a good mood. It was funny to see her humming while replaying the video we had just finished watching.

The enemy fell for our trap, and as a commander, I was obviously happy about it. Our

allies didn't suffer any damage, and we managed to create this result thanks to the useless prisoners. However…

'Humming like that is a little too much.'

"*Hmmm.*"

I would always have this thought whenever I saw Lee Ji-Hye, but I took solace in the fact that I wasn't as scummy as her.

"Scenes like this really make me happy. Do you know why? It's because they remind me that I'm not as cruel as you. You're really cruel. If we summoned a demon, I'm sure that demon will serve you as its master. *Ah*, one of us already summoned one, right?" Lee Ji-Hye teased.

"…"

She was definitely thinking about the same thing as me. I was ashamed about it, but I didn't show it. I decided to change the topic to a serious one before my conscience could take even more damage.

"When will they arrive?" I asked.

"They should arrive soon. By now, I'm sure the enemy has already received the news that our army is fast approaching. I wanted them to move a bit more discreetly, but our demon summoner dispatched patrols amidst the siege of Castle Rock."

"If possible, I wanted to surprise them. It's unfortunate," I remarked.

"I'm sure they'll be really surprised. We've been capturing their scouts, so they won't be able to figure out the exact size of our army. They'll probably think that we're just a detachment to reinforce Castle Rock. They also already know that our army is heading to the Republic's capital. They're probably thinking that we're trying to gather soldiers from different places. Of course, there's a chance that they're aware of everything—"

"Aware?" I asked, cutting her off.

"It's just a guess, but we have to be prepared just in case. One had to consider every possibility while leading an army as huge as this. Actually, the overall situation isn't

bad—no, it's too good that it's a problem," she replied.

"Can you tell me the details?" I requested.

"First, the movements of the soldiers. We haven't figured out the exact numbers, but it bothers me that there aren't that many soldiers out there. They're basically insurance and soldiers the enemy doesn't really need. They're eyesores that would only siphon supplies. In addition, having more people on the battlefield isn't always a good thing. You need to think about the supplies and the ratio of people with close-ranged jobs who can be protected using defensive magic. Of course, they could also be a part of a detachment that got separated from the main force, but that doesn't really matter at all," she answered.

"…"

"That's probably the reason why the enemy hasn't been receiving good news from the other fronts. They found room to breathe—yes, but that is all they got. They have to inflict a lot more damage on us if they want to make up for their losses," she continued.

"Is there anything else?" I asked.

"There is…"

"…" At that, I remained silent.

"We also have to talk about how most of the Eastern Front has been destroyed. The enemy still hasn't figured out our movement toward Lindel, so that's good news. But it also means that we have no idea what's going on beyond the Eastern Front. Both sides are wary of each other, but our enemy isn't dumb. We also still haven't completely grasped the exact location of the soldiers inside the Mist Summoner's mist. Some of them fell right into his trap, but where's the rest of them? It would be fine if they got lost in the misty forest, but what if they managed to find a way out?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"*Hm*…"

"In the strategy simulation data you gave me a long time ago, I thought the demon summoner was the type to torture his opponents, but real life is different from a game, and an ambush could effective for people like him," she continued.

“If that’s the case, then…” I started.

“Then it’s possible that the soldiers in the forest are cards the Republic is throwing away. This could be a stretch, but it’s possible that they never gave a shit about Yevkarina in the first place,” she replied.

“…”

“Lighten up. It’s not all that bad. It was a great achievement to trap a part of the enemy forces in the forest. We wanted as many soldiers to fall for the trap, but expecting that will make us seem like petty thieves who want to do things the easy way…” she continued.

“If you were Jin Cheong, what would you do, noona?” I asked.

“Who knows? Probably the same thing as you, Oppa. What would you do?” she asked.

“I’ll use the capital as an excuse and send a nice bait into the misty forest…” I answered.

“And attack the main force while they’re distracted. It’s the same thing as what we’re doing…” she commented.

‘You scummy bastard.’

It felt like I was cursing myself, but I couldn’t ignore that possibility because Lee Ji-Hye’s explanation made sense. Right now, we had no idea exactly how many soldiers had entered Cheon Kwan-Wi’s misty forest, and it was worth thinking if the entire detachment actually entered that forest. We couldn’t leave out the possibility of them sending only a part of their forces into the forest while making the rest turn back.

I looked at the detailed map with Lee Ji-Hye. She started tapping her finger on a specific location.

“You’re right,” I said.

“If your assumption is correct, then there’s a high chance that we will encounter them before we could reach Castle Rock. They might be ready to ambush us. The terrain is advantageous to the enemy, and their position also means that their main force at Castle Rock can easily reinforce them. I’m sure they’re busy with the siege,

but who wouldn't go crazy at the sight of the person who backstabbed them? I feel bad for saying this, but you looked pretty cocky when you provoked Jin Cheong. I'm sure even Buddha would have gotten mad at that expression of yours back then," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"That kind of hurts… Anyway, if they had already figured out this much. We have a plan, right?" I asked.

"We have to pray that the enemy didn't set up a trap to ambush us. Otherwise, there is nothing else we can do but forcefully break through that trap. From now on, we have to use strategies," she replied.

'Strategy.'

It was easier said than done. After all, even Lee Ji-Hye had acknowledged that the demon summoner was really great at coming up with strategies.

Actually, Lee Ji-Hye didn't manage to beat the demon summoner even once in the strategy simulation game I created based on the data I obtained from the board game I played with Jin Cheong. In the end, she was forced to give up and acknowledge that she couldn't beat Jin Cheong.

I had no idea whether she did something to hone her skills or not, but the demon summoner was definitely a strong foe.

While I was stewing in my own anxious thoughts, the soldiers continued marching.

All of a sudden, there was a loud explosion. I knew something like this could happen, but I couldn't help but find it dirty when I saw it happening in real life.

"Shit…"

"…"

"You do have a plan, right?" I asked.

"Of course," Lee Ji-Hye replied.

She nodded confidently, but I couldn't help but feel nervous.

“My pride was hurt a lot, so I have to show him that real life is different from his games,” she added.

I couldn’t help but nod at that.

“So you do have a strategy…” I pointed out.

“It’s more like I’ve had it in mind,” she said.

“So what…”

“The tactical Kim Hyun-Sung,” she answered.

“What?” I asked.

“The tactical Kim Hyun-Sung. He prepared a strategy,” she revealed.

“*Ah*…”

“You know better than I do, so that’s why I’ve been hiding it,” she added.

“*Hahahaha.* You’re right… I completely forgot about him! I’ve been forgetting about our Hyun-Sung,” I laughed.

I wasn’t sure if he could be called a strategy, but it was safe to say that his destructive power was a strategy in itself. I wasn’t laughing because I was going crazy.

Kim Hyun-Sung was an extraordinary monster created by egotistic gods. He was a rare figure Altanus brought back in time and the real envoy of the gods who had received the goddess’ affection.

The mythic equipment and his stats made him a monster, so we actually didn’t need a trivial strategy. The tactical Kim Hyun-Sung was our strategy.

“Dispatch our tactical Kim Hyun-Sung, then!” I ordered.

“I’m on it,” she responded.

1. Lee Ki-Young's POV ☜

CHAPTER 395
REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL (1)

The wars here and the ones on Earth were completely different. I had mentioned this a few times before, but it wouldn't hurt to say it again.

'Indeed.'

I immediately found the answer to why wars here and on Earth were completely different from each other. It was all because of how much influence one person could have on this continent. It was the same as what Jung Ha-Yan had shown in Laois. It was the same as the work Mist Summoner Cheon Kwan-Wi was doing right now, and it was the same as what the Republic Five Tiger Generals were doing, which was pushing back our forces in Dawan and Celia.

What about Cha Hee-Ra, whose strength was definitely beyond Mythic? She single-handedly stopped the battle at Castle Rock by herself, and she greatly influenced the course of the battle. There were many reasons in Cha Hee-Ra's case, but it was enough to show how much influence a person could have on the continent.

If I were to exaggerate, people like them were basically tactical nukes. A more humble example would be to use fighter jets and tanks. Anyone's jaws would drop if their enemies suddenly rode a tank into a battlefield where everyone should have been using nothing but arrows and swords.

This was why if the enemy had tactical weapons, we need them as well. If the enemy had a warrior whose endurance couldn't be shattered by arrows and swords, then we needed an archer who could break through that warrior's defenses.

The wars on this continent had always been like that, and it only kind of changed when the foreigners arrived here. Of course, it didn't mean that the results themselves had been greatly affected. What changed the most was the process.

One could easily deduce the strength of a nation based on the number of tutorial dungeons they possessed. It was why they were astonished to see foreigners coming out of those dungeons. New influential people started getting involved in the close-

knitted relationships that were being maintained all this time.

Of course, the foreigners weren't invincible. Even swordsmen with outstanding endurance would eventually get destroyed, and it was even worse for mages.

I had plenty of experience when it came to that because there were a few times when I almost got sent to the afterlife when an arrow came flying from somewhere while I wasn't keeping my guard up.

Swordsmen with high stamina would eventually get tired, and mages with strong firepower would eventually run out of mana. If an enemy could go up against our named members, then our movements would get limited.

But what about Kim Hyun-Sung? Let us assume the enemy didn't have a tactical weapon that could go up against our tactical weapon.

'There's nothing more that needs to be said.'

He was a human being who had been chosen by the gods. From the very beginning, he possessed abilities an ordinary human couldn't even begin to imagine. However, he didn't stop training to become an even better version of himself. There was also no need to mention his stats that I had seen through Mind's Eye.

The Mercenary Queen's strength was beyond Mythic, but Kim Hyun-Sung was a jack of all trades, skilled with everything. Aside from Intelligence, his stats were over 90 points, and he had four Legendary attributes. He was like the main character of novels and comics. I was sure that the current Kim Hyun-Sung could be considered the strongest human being in the world, and of the many people I had met so far, I still hadn't seen anyone stronger than him.

- Prepare for battle!

- Prepare for battle!

- React immediately to their spells and arrows! Mages, hurry up and maintain the defensive spells!

The soldiers were in disarray, and Kim Hyun-Sung was hiding in a remote location. He seemed really calm. As long as I was with the regressor, I could probably fall asleep in the middle of the battlefield. He was breathing quietly and even doing light

stretches.

The priests were pouring their buffs while the mages concentrated their support spells on him, and anyone could tell that Kim Hyun-Sung was the main character on this battlefield.

The troops were shocked by the enemy's ambush. Of course, we trained our troops with the basics on how to react to an ambush, but it was understandable for them to react that way because an ambush was an ambush.

Explosions went off incessantly. Lee Ji-Hye and I weren't affected by the explosions because we were watching everything from a safe location, but we could see that the damage was accumulating.

Booooooooom!!!

Crumble…

Crumble…

"Those soldiers aren't here to defeat the allied soldiers. They're here to either delay us or deal enough damage to us," Lee Ji-Hye pointed out.

"Oh, really? They look like they want to kill us," I commented.

"It means they're that desperate. If possible, I wanted to preserve our soldiers and march, but it looks like we will have to take some damage. For now, let's make sure to keep our formations varied. I want to avoid it, but we have no choice but to participate in this fight. Fighting here could actually be a good thing, though," she suggested.

"When will Kim Hyun-Sung join?" I asked.

"He's not someone you can use whenever you want. We need to use him as effectively as possible so that he can be called the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung. *Where* you use the named players is important, but how you use them is the most important. Let's see… it's important for us to clear the way, at the very least. It's my job to make sure we're taking the smallest possible risk while using a tactical nuke on our enemy," she replied.

"*Hm*, alright. I can leave that to you, right?" I questioned.

"Yes, for now," she answered.

"I'm going to go outside and see what's going on," I told her.

"Don't stay out there too long, or you'll get hit by one of those arrows," she warned.

Lee Ji-Hye was serious when she said that. I stepped outside and heard all kinds of explosions. It was definitely different out here. I had experienced situations like this before, but I had just realized that this war was on a whole new scale.

Various spells were falling from the sky, and the allied troops grouped up to cast a fortified barrier.

Booooooooooooom!!

Craaaaaaaack!!!

"Mage support unit! Cast shield! Cast shield!"

"Conserve as much mana as possible! Move, move, move! Move away from the bombing range! What are you doing?!"

"*Ahhhhhh!*"

"Priest! Priest!"

"This is an order to prepare a counterattack spell! This is our top priority!"

"Check the magic circle first before casting the spell!"

"Channel the spell!"

"Attack!"

"…!"

'Are they firing back already? That was fast.'

It was proof that the detachment was well-trained, and even though I wasn't the one who trained them, I couldn't help but feel proud. Having a control tower was useful because it helped deal with ambushes, but the enemies were on higher ground, so it seemed like our spells wouldn't be able to reach them. We were basically at the front lines, and I could tell that the demon summoner was well-prepared.

"I want the warriors to maintain formation and move forward as much as possible. Make sure the rearguard avoids damage as much as possible. It's one of our top priorities."

"Understood!"

"Those with a defensive-type artifact should move to the center! Push them back as much as possible!"

"Shit! Don't let those bastards climb up here!"

Lee Ji-Hye continued giving orders from the command center, and the army was following her orders. Overall, it just seemed like the soldiers were approaching the enemy, but she gave details whenever she gave orders, so this was different from just charging at the enemy.

'Damage to the allied forces isn't the issue here… '

The problem was that the mages' mana and the priests' holy power were continuously being consumed. Even if we manage to break through this place, it was uncertain whether the priests and the mages would have enough stamina to participate in the next battle.

'This is what he wants… '

The enemy had enough soldiers to pull out. They would be in an advantageous position if they managed to deplete the stamina of our soldiers, and if they managed to inflict a lot of damage on us, then it meant that they basically hit the jackpot.

In many ways, we were at a disadvantage, so I started to get curious about when Kim Hyun-Sung would get dispatched.

"*Ahhhhhhh!*"

“Medic! Medic!”

“A fireball directly hit the fifth squad.”

Allied soldiers were getting injured, and I couldn’t help but think that there was a problem. However, it shouldn’t be the case because there was no way Lee Ji-Hye wouldn’t know the perfect timing.

I was about to ask the command center for details, but…

‘Huh?’

I saw ice flying toward me. To be exact, it was a piece of ice shaped like a spear.

‘Wait, is that ice?’

It seemed like others weren’t able to see it, and it felt like time was moving slowly. I was getting curious about how I didn’t notice something like that until it got *this* close to me.

I got goosebumps because the spear broke through the barrier spell that was used on the entire command center, and it kept on flying toward me. I cast a spell, but the dragon shield manifested slower than the ice spear’s flight speed.

A simple *ouch* wouldn’t be able to describe the damage I would receive if I were to take this attack.

I started getting annoyed by the fact that my body wasn’t reacting fast enough.

I did my best to move to the side to try to avoid a fatal injury, but the spear flying toward me made me think about many things.

‘Someone is behind this… ’

They had to be someone who specialized in assassination or sniping. The fact that they could throw a spear from afar and ensure that it wouldn’t get detected until it was too late meant that the assassin was a named member of the enemy.

The spear continued flying toward me, and I decided to lean back as much as I could…

Clang!

A sound akin to a window pane being shattered reverberated.

"*Huh?*"

"Are you okay?"

I saw Kim Hyun-Sung standing in front of me.

'Why is he here? Wait, when did he get here?'

As far as I could recall, he was preparing to make a move somewhere far away from the command center. I had no idea when he started flying toward me, but it was interesting how he arrived in the proverbial blink of an eye.

However, I was even more astonished to see his appearance.

'He's really handsome.'

He was holding me with one arm while his other arm was holding the remains of the ice spear. The composition of the spear didn't really matter because it directly turned into sparkling dust, which reflected light on Kim Hyun-Sung's face.

I was looking at him with my naked eye, but I felt like I was looking at a filtered picture. The sun that suddenly emerged from beyond the clouds enhanced his features even more, so it felt like I was looking at a poster or a scene from a movie.

I was about to say something because we were just awkwardly standing still, but Kim Hyun-Sung spoke first.

"I think it would be better if you go inside until I take care of the sniper, Mr. Ki-Young. It's dangerous here, and I'm sure everyone is targeting you."

"I agree. I got… careless. I didn't think that the barrier would break so easily," I said.

"I'm sure it was a spell focused on penetration. An attribute could also be influencing it. It's intimidating, but it won't be able to pierce the command center's defenses. Please hurry inside…" Kim Hyun-Sung explained.

“Got it, and thank you, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I told him.

“I only did what was right,” he said.

“By the way, is it okay… for you to be… here…” I stammered.

“I was kind of late, but it should be fine. I just received the order as well. Now… I’ll be on my way,” he replied.

“Okay, be careful,” I told him.

“*Ah!* I’ve told you this before, but you need to take the situation into account and be careful, Mr. Ki-Young. Please deliver this to the command center as well,” he requested.

“Okay, sure,” I answered.

“I’ll be going now,” he said.

It was shocking to see him disappear in an instant. However, I immediately went back inside the command center because I was worried that something else would come flying at me.

The magic hologram showed Kim Hyun-Sung running, and I knew where he was running toward.

‘So he was looking for the right opportunity… ’

I saw him running toward the guy who hurled that spear at me.

“How is he running so fast?” I mumbled.

He was so fast that my eyes couldn’t keep up with him.

A few moments later, I heard screams from all over the place.

“Tactical nuke incoming!”

CHAPTER 396
REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL (2)

“What was that just now? What kind of guy lets himself get carried like a princess?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“You saw that?” I asked.

“Yes, I saw it, and that’s why I said you shouldn’t go out there and peek like that. I haven’t told you this yet, but your face is no different from a taunting totem, and while we’re on the subject, please refrain from looking at people with those sparkly eyes of yours. It’s the reason why that novel about you is selling like hotcakes even though we’re in the middle of a war. Did you know that many women are leaving the front lines? I’m not sure if this is true, but the women are saying that they don’t want to die because they’re still waiting for the next volume. It can be helpful—yes, but you know that getting involved in a rumor is—”

“What novel?” I asked, interrupting her.

“You don’t know?” she asked.

“I’ve heard of it, but what does that have to do with—”

“I-It’s nothing. You’re slow in the strangest parts,” she said, interrupting me.

“What?” I asked.

“Don’t worry about it. Anyway, did you get hurt?” she questioned.

“No, I’m fine. Thanks to a certain someone,” I said.

“Be careful. If it weren’t for Mr. Hyun-Sung—anyway, monitor this screen for now since I have to give orders. Actually, it’s better for you to stay here because you understand Hyun-Sung oppa better than I do,” she said.

“What’s with the screen?” I asked.

“It’s a Kim Hyun-Sung exclusive magic hologram. We’re using an action camera, which will give us a first-person point of view of Kim Hyun-Sung because it’s hard to keep up with him using an ordinary camera. The basic route is set, but… your job is to give directions, coordinate, and set the objectives. Aside from those, you can give support when it comes to smaller tasks. You can easily make a decision because you know Hyun-Sung oppa’s abilities better than me. You know them, right? I honestly want to do it, but I think you’ll do better than me. I need to check the other stations as well,” she explained.

“You’re awfully prepared,” I remarked.

“Since we’re going to use Tall Boy, we might as well use him properly. His stamina and mana are limited—*ah!* Don’t make him overdo it. I’ll go back to my work now since the enemy seems pretty tough,” she reminded.

“We’re not getting pushed back, right?” I asked.

“No, but I’m still worried. Anyway, it’s about to start. Focus,” she said.

“Okay.”

‘Yeah, she sure is a successful woman.’

I couldn’t help but think that way…

I knew she was a smart woman, but I had never expected her to use this kind of method. We were able to view Kim Hyun-Sung’s actions from his point of view, and since we would give him instructions, it was no different from playing a game. Actually, it was closer to Auto-Hunting. I didn’t have to manually control our tactical Kim Hyun-Sung because he would take care of everything on his own.

‘I think this is good—no, it’s great.’

I had no choice but to trust Kim Hyun-Sung’s decisions because he had more experience on the battlefield than me. I was sure that he knew how to fight and what he had to do to conquer the enemy. Of course, a war this big was more complicated. Kim Hyun-Sung’s eyes weren’t everywhere. He wouldn’t know exactly what was happening on the battlefield unless he had a bird’s eye view of everything. As such, my job was to support him using a camera that gave me a larger view of everything and his personal action camera. This was definitely the perfect job for me because I

knew Kim Hyun-Sung's abilities better than anyone else.

'Nice.'

- I'll start breaking through.

"Okay, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I replied.

Lee Ji-Hye was right. Ordinary eyes couldn't keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung once he started running with all his might, and if it weren't for his personal action camera, I wouldn't have been able to see how he was moving.

'Is he really human?'

His surroundings were changing really fast, and describing his speed as just *fast* wasn't enough. It looked like he was faster than a train. He unsheathed his sword, and in the proverbial blink of an eye, the arms and legs of the enemy in front of him went flying.

The enemy's limbs were still in the air, but Kim Hyun-Sung was already swinging his sword elsewhere. As soon as he started running around everywhere, the weapons and the severed limbs of the enemies started flying into the air.

Before their severed limbs and arms touched the ground, Kim Hyun-Sung was already elsewhere.

- *Swish, thud!*

The enemy showed all sorts of reactions.

- *Ahhhhhhhh!*

- What the! What? What's… that?!

- Stop him! Do whatever you can to stop him from climbing up!

- Just now! *Ahhhhh!*

- Shit! Medic! Medic! Priest!

- This is so crazy! Shit!

His movement was so chaotic to the point that I felt like I couldn't react fast enough to his actions even though I was giving him instructions. It was difficult to give instructions to Kim Hyun-Sung.

'He's too fast.'

"A101 on your eleven."

- Got it.

"After B21 on your nine."

- Affirmative.

"Change route."

"Next destination, south-west quadrant, kill the enemy mage. Move immediately to E point."

- Okay.

His sword incessantly danced, and before I could say anything else, he arrived at the destination and eliminated the target.

"Ji-Hye, Lee Ji-Hye!" I hurriedly called out.

"…"

"Ji-Hye noona!" I yelled.

"W-What? I'm busy right now, too," she answered.

"Send a few more goddess' mirrors to my side. One for each point. Hurry," I ordered.

"Why?" she asked.

"He's moving too fast for me to track properly. Hurry up. I need a wider view," I replied.

“H-Hold on,” she said.

“Okay.”

Lee Ji-Hye had to have seen my situation with her own eyes because she immediately sent mirrors to each point. Afterward, my eyes and hands started to get faster because the situation was being shown live. I had to move fast because Kim Hyun-Sung was moving faster than my eyes, and I couldn’t help but pant while doing my best to keep up with him. I was sure that the only reason I could keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung was thanks to my eye-related ability. If Lee Ji-Hye were in my shoes, then she would have long fallen behind. I continued giving instructions, setting objectives, and finding out in real-time where our nuke called Kim Hyun-Sung was needed the most on the battlefield.

‘This isn’t enough. This isn’t nearly enough.’

I couldn’t follow Kim Hyun-Sung’s movement, and I felt really frustrated because I couldn’t give him the information he needed. It felt like I was arrogantly trying to drive a Lamborghini. A part of me felt miserable for not being able to bring out our lovely regressor’s full potential, but I wasn’t going to give up. As I moved my fingers, Kim Hyun-Sung’s personal screen didn’t stop moving, and I couldn’t give him time to rest. If his guide decided to sit back and watch, he would surely start doubting the guide.

‘This makes my head hurt… ’

I was neither a genius nor a smart guy. My brain was having a hard time processing the information my eyes were seeing, and I suddenly felt something wet on my nostrils. The rusty smell of blood lingered around me. I was struggling, but I wanted to applaud myself for being able to keep up with Kim Hyun-Sung’s movement so far. I wanted to pat my own head, but I had no time to do that because the enemy was sending soldiers to counter our nuke. Unfortunately for them, Kim Hyun-Sung was a different kind of beast.

- You bastard! Dieee!

A large-framed soldier shouted. He looked proud, but he was instantly decapitated.

- Maintain the shield spell! Buy a bit more time!

The soldier who had just shouted collapsed when his arm was severed. I wasn't sure how Kim Hyun-Sung was making his decision about who he should kill, but he definitely had a standard. Personally, I prefer that he didn't kill everyone, but there were benefits to creating casualties.

"A mage is channeling a spell at 213.41. The target seems to be at the base," I informed.

- Affirmative. I'll take care of them after finishing up here.

"Next."

- Affirmative.

"Next."

- Affirmative.

"Next."

- Affirmative.

The mage was pretty far, but I believed that Kim Hyun-Sung would make it.

Kim Hyun-Sung retrieved a dagger from his chest pocket and hurled it. The dagger pierced the shield spell and lodged itself into the channeling mage's forehead.

- Done.

'He's really fast.'

However, what he did just now consumed a bit of his mana. The repercussions couldn't be seen right now, but it would be best for him to conserve his mana. After all, we still had no idea what would happen later.

"You can slow down a bit," I told him.

- Okay.

'Who the hell is he?'

I was seeing the same thing our lovely regressor was seeing. I saw soldiers placing a dangerous monster before him, and there were named players from the enemy's side as well. Even though I was watching the scenes through a screen, I could feel the enemies' breathing, Kim Hyun-Sung's breathing, and the intensity of Kim Hyun-Sung's skirmishes with the enemies. He wasn't in any danger at all. Hundreds of arrows were flying all at once toward him. There was also a small group of soldiers and mages created to stop Kim Hyun-Sung, and they kept on attacking him. I thought he would retreat at the sight of all this, but he was so ridiculously good at combat. He either dodged or blocked the attacks he couldn't dodge.

This was my first time seeing him fight at this high of a level.

'He's too strong. His existence is breaking the balance.'

There was a reason he was called the masterpiece created by the gods. I couldn't help but feel a pure sense of awe at how a mere human being could be this strong. There wasn't anything extraordinary about what Kim Hyun-Sung was doing. He was just dodging or blocking attacks. However, seeing him repeat such simple actions hundreds of times without fail was a sight to behold.

'He can only be described as overpowered.'

The arms of the majority of the soldiers were severed before they could do anything to stop Kim Hyun-Sung. Even the skilled soldiers didn't manage to last that long. At this point, I could already deduce the enemy commander's thoughts. I was sure they were thinking that a moving nuke had fallen in the middle of the battlefield. Even I couldn't believe what was going on despite seeing it with my own eyes. Finally, I noticed the enemy soldiers changing their strategy.

'They're trying to suppress him.'

Part of the overall force I could see was focused on Kim Hyun-Sung.

"Ji-Hye noona!" I called out.

"…"

"Ji-Hye noona!" I yelled.

"…"

“Honey! Darling! Wife!” I shouted.

“*Huh*? What now?” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

“Give me a priest and a mage. A named player with the longest cast range. Actually, give me a list of priests and mages in each quadrant. Hurry up and send them right here,” I ordered.

“W-Will you be okay?” she asked.

“What do you mean?” I questioned.

“You’re bleeding, oppa.” She pointed out.

“I’m fine, so just send them. Hurry,” I answered.

“O-Okay. Y-You seem like you need them more than him…” she stuttered.

“Hurry up. Then, display the current situation on the mirror,” I requested.

The goddess’ mirrors—no, the magic holograms in front of me depicted a sight to behold.

“I feel like we should make an operational manual or something for this,” I muttered, but I had other thoughts as well.

“That sounds fun. What will you call it?” she asked.

I didn’t answer her, but the perfect title for the operational manual was in my head.

‘Regressor Instruction Manual.’

“That’s it! Hyun-Sung! I love you! Shit!” I cried out.

CHAPTER 397
REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL (3)

'Is this happening? Is this… really happening?'

I[1]couldn't help but be doubtful. Honestly, I was uncomfortable when I heard about it. It was all because I knew that it was almost impossible to give effective orders on the battlefield, especially when variables could always pop up. The situation on the battlefield would change every minute, and incidents outside the commander's calculations often occurred in the middle of a chaotic battlefield.

For example, a change could occur at Point A, which would make enemy troops move to a different location. In addition, there could also be arrows and spells bombarding the given coordinates. I knew the concept of moving soldiers by detachments and setting them up in large battles, but I had never heard about making one person do all those, which was why I was uncomfortable with the idea.

The goddess' mirror was making sure that I would always have a larger view of the battlefield, but there was still a delay, which I didn't really like. However, as time went on, I couldn't help but acknowledge the fact that things were going better than I had expected as I completed my objectives.

'This doesn't make sense.'

Setting up a route or giving out coordinates was understandable because the command center could request backup for the allied forces that needed backup. However, giving objectives and making sure that the details were accurate was different.

There was a limit to how much a person's eyes could see, and there was also a limit to how much information their brain could quickly process.

I couldn't see everything, and I had limited time to organize the information I was receiving.

If my reaction time were slow, then I would say that I wasn't suitable for this kind of

job. However, the fact that even I was having a bit of trouble reacting meant that it was pretty much impossible for ordinary people.

'My eyes are kind of special, Mr. Hyun-Sung.'

This could be a glimpse of what Lee Ki-Young had said to me before. The powerhouses and tacticians I knew would never be able to do something like this.

It was only natural for people to evaluate each other differently the more time they spent with each other. At first, I simply thought that he was pretty useful. But now, the person who didn't particularly strike me as someone special had become someone indispensable to me. He had become a friend and a brother who was also helping me lead other people.

I couldn't help but think about just how I missed a genius like him in my past life, and I nodded after I confirmed once more that swinging my sword to save him in the tutorial dungeon was the best decision I had ever made in my second life.

'There's an enemy.'

I saw archers pulling back their bowstrings in front of me, but I didn't move because I knew I would soon receive an instruction. As expected, I quickly received an instruction.

- Point C, 321.12.

"Confirmed."

The barrier was thick, but…

'I can break through it.'

There was a large-framed man standing in front of me. He was wielding an axe paired with a large shield. He started swinging at me, so I responded with a swing of my own and felt something unpleasant as blood started flowing out of the large-framed man.

I kept on moving. I didn't want to give the large-framed man a chance to rest. While all this was happening, I kept on receiving instructions, and I kept on responding to them. I couldn't help but feel like Lee Ki-Young was right next to me as he kept on

giving me instructions. I was sure he was more reliable than a comrade watching my back.

'The buff is about to expire.'

- Point C, 321.69

"Confirmed."

As soon as I reached my destination, holy power started pouring down on me. The priest pouring holy power down on me stared agape at the scene. The priest received nothing but an order to send out their holy power toward a certain location at a certain time, and I was sure that they had no idea where I was located before I arrived here.

'I understand how that priest feels.'

The other allies felt the same. It was so ridiculous they had never imagined it was possible. The battlefield turned into a stage made for me. I didn't have to worry about anything else other than wiping the enemies out and reaching my destination. To be honest, I didn't have the luxury of thinking about the arrows and spells falling toward me from the skies. I didn't really have to think about them because I knew my allies would protect me at the right time.

Booom!

A large screen manifested in mid-air, blocking enemy spells. The caster—an allied mage—looked at me in shock. A few minutes ago, they received a ridiculous order to channel and prepare a defensive spell and to cast it at a certain time.

They followed the order to the letter, and they had just witnessed the results of that seemingly absurd order.

'He's… reading the battlefield.'

It was the best way to describe it.

The wounds I sustained were healing, and the buff on me seemed like it would last forever. Whenever I moved to a designated point, I would receive a buff from a holy priest, and whenever I stumbled upon a fortified location, a spell would shatter the

enemies' defenses, opening a path for me. It was the same for the warriors helping me push the enemies back. While the allied forces were pushing the enemies back, an opening would randomly appear, catching the enemies off guard.

I was thrilled. I didn't particularly like to fight, but I had a partner I was in harmony with, so I was enjoying the fight.

"Die! You monster! *Cough!*"

An enemy soldier yelled before collapsing, and I heard an ally's voice afterward.

"Behind you, Mr. Hyun-Sung!"

I heard them, but I didn't pay attention to them because I already knew what would happen. As expected, I heard a loud scream. I looked back and saw an enemy falling backward with an arrow lodged in their forehead. I was sure that everyone around me felt the same as me. At first glance, the orders were seemingly random, but the allied forces were actually connected systematically, similar to a spider web.

- Move to the next location.

"Confirmed."

- Next.

"Confirmed."

- You can slow down. Pay attention to your stamina.

"Confirmed."

'He's a genius.'

I couldn't help but think that way.

"*Cough!*"

"You crazy monster! Die! Stop him! Stop him from coming up here!"

"Use all your magic and arrows! We just need to hit him once! Just once!"

“But…!”

“Shut up and pull! Stop that bastard from coming—*Cough!*”

- Well done.

“It was nothing.”

I took a moment to compose myself, and while I was doing that, the priests poured holy power down on me again, and my current buffs were refreshed. I turned around and saw a ridiculous sight.

I had been growing a lot in this second life of mine, but even in my past life, where I almost reached the limits of my potential, I had never been in a war that was as satisfying as this. Honestly, this couldn’t be considered war anymore. If the battles I had fought in my past life were considered off-road, unpaved beaten paths, then this battle could be considered riding a luxurious sedan on a smooth, paved road.

I had grown enough to match the mana and stamina I possessed in my previous life, but I was fighting a battle that was markedly different from the battles I had ever participated in so far. As such, I couldn’t help but clench my fists.

‘I think I can fight all day.’

Of course, fighting all day was just an exaggeration on my part, but I had a feeling that it might be possible here.

- Careful. At your twelve o’clock.

“Affirmative.”

I got distracted, but his voice awakened me from my stupor. I immediately reacted and saw a spear that looked incredibly similar to earlier. It was definitely the same spear that flew toward Mr. Lee Ki-Young earlier. I blocked it with my sword, and it immediately shattered with a loud noise, sending glass-like fragments into the wind.

- I’ll give you the exact coordinates. It seems like the caster chose you as their target.

“All right, I’ll go check.”

- Go.

“Okay.”

The moment I decided to move, a spear was flying toward me again, so I immediately moved toward the coordinates I had just received.

A loud explosion echoed afterward, the spear struck the place where the enemy soldiers were located, and they collapsed to the ground upon impact.

“*Ah!*”

I had no idea whether they wanted to block or dodge the spear earlier, but I had no time to think about it nor look around because the next attack was already flying toward me.

‘I’ll block it.’

I swung my sword.

Clang!

‘Block it.’

Clang!

‘Dodge it.’

Boom!

‘Block it.’

Clang!

It was difficult to move in such a crowded place, but the allied forces continued to make a path for me. The command center delivered precise instructions to the safe and fastest route that I could take. We still had no idea who was hurling spears at us, but I was sure the command center was trying its best to track them down.

A glass spear nicked my shoulder.

'It's fine.'

I was hurt, but the wound wasn't deep.

'Focus.'

Another spear came flying, and I blocked it again.

Clang! Clang! Booooom!

I naturally mustered as much power as I could. My surroundings were a mess, but it was all because of my long-ranged opponent. Unfortunately for them, I was getting closer and closer to my destination, and I kept on moving while dealing as much damage as I could to them.

At this point, I was sure that my spear-throwing opponent finally noticed that I was getting closer.

- We'll be moving a bit faster.

"Affirmative."

Mr. Lee Ki-Young told me to move faster because my spear-throwing opponent had started moving. The incessant flying spears finally stopped. The battlefield kept on changing, so the coordinates I was receiving kept on changing as well. However, I knew that I would eventually catch my spear-throwing opponent.

The battle would become a bit difficult for me if I exhausted myself by moving so fast for an extended period of time, but there was no way that I would get exhausted if I only had to worry about my spear-throwing opponent. I didn't have to worry about other attacks, and when it came to the flying spears, the command center could already see where they were coming from.

In fact, the command center was even telling me where the flying spears would land.

"Tie it! Tie it as tight as you can! Until we can get some distance—*Ahhh!*"

"T-this crazy bastard…!"

"Tie it as… *Cough!*"

I gathered mana beneath my feet and kicked off of the ground as hard as I could, which immediately sent me flying into the air. While I was in mid-air, I saw a man staring at me in disbelief. However, he reacted quickly and hurled a spear toward me.

“You bastard! Die!”

- You don’t have to dodge it.

“Affirmative.”

If I dodged the flying spear, I would just be giving my opponent an opening. I had to take advantage of this opportunity and eliminate my spear-throwing opponent before he could escape and disappear into the crowd. I was kind of nervous, but I bit my lips.

I swung my sword rather than dodging the flying spear, and the man’s eyes widened.

“You crazy bastard…!”

Clang!

There was a loud noise, and I suddenly found myself shining. I definitely didn’t dodge the attack just now, so I instinctively looked to the side and saw Park Deok-Gu getting hurt in my place. I was sure he cast his attribute on me and took damage in my stead.

‘I can’t figure out his limits.’

Goosebumps broke all over my back.

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1. Kim Hyun-Sung’s pov ☜

CHAPTER 398
REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL (4)

'No way.'

"Point C, 321.12," I[1] said.

- Affirmative.

"Point C, 321.69," I told Kim Hyun-Sung.

- Affirmative.

'How is he so fast?'

As the battle went on, my jaw dropped even lower. I was having a difficult time tracking Kim Hyun-Sung's movements even though I was moving my eyes as fast as I could. It seemed that I had already reached my limits.

I wanted to praise myself for making it this far, but I had no leeway to do anything else because the battlefield was constantly changing, which meant the information I was seeing was changing as well.

The battlefield was changing so fast that it was ridiculous. I was surprised by how Kim Hyun-Sung carried out the orders I gave him, even if it seemed a bit too much. He was moving too fast, so I had to make sure his routes were safe in real time.

'Shit.'

The issue was that I ended up making more work for myself, and it was all because I thought that I had already gotten used to Kim Hyun-Sung's speed. I knew I shouldn't have asked for priests and mages. I had already expected that Kim Hyun-Sung would be moving faster than most people, but it was difficult to support him while he was drunk in the atmosphere of the battlefield.

The best I could do for him was constantly instruct him to go to where our allies

were located to get him healed up and refresh his buffs. I also made sure to block the spells falling toward him as well as dispatch warriors ahead of time so that they could carve a path he could use safely.

To be honest, I was already pushing the envelope by doing all these.

'I can't pay too much attention to the details.'

I had no time to pay attention to the types of buffs Kim Hyun-Sung was receiving as well as the type of spells that had to be blocked. Of course, this included the type of support he was receiving as well as the amount of holy power being poured over him. If I knew and took into account the habits and attributes of those with Epic and Legendary attributes, then I was sure that Kim Hyun-Sung would find it a bit easier to move.

Kim Hyun-Sung's limits definitely didn't lie here, so I got bothered by the fact that I was holding him back. I felt relieved that I was somewhat helpful, but I was sure there were disadvantages when it came to receiving orders from me.

"You can slow down. Pay attention to your stamina," I told him.

- Okay.

'Yeah, let's take a break… '

- *Cough!*

- You crazy monster! Die! Stop him! Don't let him come up here!

- Don't hold back on your spells and arrows. We just need to hit him once. Just once!

'I told you to slow down, man… '

- Shut up and pull the string! Stop him from coming up—*cough!*

- *Ahhh!*

- There's only one enemy! Only one!

'Slow down, you bastard!'

- What are the warriors doing?!

- Magic! Stop him with magic! Magic! *Aaahhh!*

“Good job, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I told him.

- It was nothing.

‘I told you to slow down. Damn, he seems like he’s having fun.’

Kim Hyun-Sung was having fun while I felt like my head was going to explode just from supporting him with all I had. All sorts of information made a beeline for my head as I watched the battlefield, but my brain was finding it difficult to process all the information it was receiving at the same time. As such, the faster Kim Hyun-Sung moved, the heavier the burden was on me.

‘Will my Intelligence increase after doing all this?’

I had no idea how much information my brain could process because this was the first time I used my brain like this. I never had the opportunity to do something like this, even back on Earth. Personally, I thought the reason I managed to last this long was because of my high Intelligence stat.

If my stats were similar to my stats back when I was still in the tutorial dungeon, then I was sure that I would collapse within fifteen seconds of doing all this. Actually, scrap that—five seconds could be my limit back then.

I felt stupid for thinking that getting a nosebleed from overworking one’s brain only happened in cartoons or movies. I even laughed out loud and mocked by saying that it was all a lie to create a dramatic effect, but I was mistaken.

My head was aching badly, but I couldn’t do anything about it. I had to keep moving my eyes. To make things worse, I couldn’t even wipe away the blood dripping down my nostrils because Kim Hyun-Sung was still waiting for my order.

‘Why is this guy making me work hard?’

It wouldn’t be bad to move a little slower, but the way he moved made it seem like he was trying to make me reach my limits. The situation abated a bit, but I saw him moving fast, so I had no choice but to force myself to move with him.

I bit my lips for a moment, but then I suddenly saw a flying spear grazing Kim Hyun-Sung's shoulder.

"*Ah.*"

- I'm fine.

'Shit… '

My heart started breaking when I saw the wound on his shoulder, and even though it wasn't a deep wound, he wouldn't have been wounded in the first place if I just reacted a bit faster.

'I missed it.'

Obviously, I bit my lips because it hurt my pride a bit. It shouldn't take long for me to find the guy who had hurled the spear because I was sure they chose Kim Hyun-Sung as their target.

'Don't get hurt, Hyun-Sung.'

The enemy targeted Kim Hyun-Sung much later than I thought, and I had made a mistake by thinking that they were supporting a different detachment. The enemies were being plagued by Kim Hyun-Sung, so I was sure they threw the spear after receiving so much damage.

I was certain that they were prepared for the consequences as well. After all, they knew that they would end up getting killed if they moved hastily.

'He's a difficult type of enemy to deal with.'

Those who knew their limits were more annoying than those who were arrogant. In addition, they even had an escape route, so they definitely considered their safety the top priority. Another spear was thrown at high speeds, and I scrambled to figure out what was around the enemy.

It was already a lot of work for me to move Park Deok-Gu and Yoo Ah-Young's detachment, giving precise instructions to the mages about when and where they should use their magic.

I was moving my left and right hand in different directions as well. I was worried about making a mistake with my hands, but fortunately, no mistake happened so far.

The magic hologram showed Kim Hyun-Sung moving. I didn't expect that it would be so enjoyable to make him move as efficiently as possible within the confines of the battlefield and the situation. Kim Hyun-Sung didn't waver even once. He would either dodge or block the flying spears before moving toward the many coordinates I was giving him. There was a sense of thrill in doing all this. I felt like I was doing a puzzle, and the puzzle pieces were finally starting to make sense.

I just had to support him at the right time and at the right place, and the regressor would kill the enemy for free.

'This regressor will kill the enemy for free!'

Flying spears kept on flying at him, but he continued to dodge or block them. The spear-throwing opponent was probably speechless and confused by Kim Hyun-Sung's movement. I finally gathered enough information about the spear-throwing opponent, and I proceeded to deliver the information to Kim Hyun-Sung as well as the optimal route for him to reach his destination.

Kim Hyun-Sung reacted so quickly that it was difficult to think that he was actually moving based on the information I just gave him. However, I could clearly see from here that he was following my instructions to the letter.

The tricky spear-throwing opponent kept on targeting Kim Hyun-Sung. Honestly, it was more accurate to say that he was a sniper rather than just a spear-throwing player. If Kim Hyun-Sung were a bit closer to him, then I was sure that he wouldn't even try to attack him. As such, it became clear to me that his detachment was supporting him.

The priests and vanguards at the front line were moving together. The spear-throwing opponent had to have thought that it would be too much for him to throw more spears because I saw him retreating through the goddess' mirror. I got annoyed because he actually threw one last spear before retreating for good measure.

'My head hurts.'

Kim Hyun-Sung had to conserve as much stamina as possible, but getting rid of a powerful named player from the enemy's side would be a net positive result.

“The seventh detachment will soon arrive at the provided coordinates,” I said.

- Affirmative.

The allied and enemy forces sustained more damage as time went on. Kim Hyun-Sung was doing his best to block as many spears as he could, but it was physically impossible to block so many spears flying in so many directions.

“Ji-Hye, make a path!” I ordered.

“What? Where?” she asked.

“I’m going to dispatch the seventh detachment to the coordinates I just shared. You just have to make sure that they arrive there as fast as possible. I made sure that the location is near the seventh detachment,” I replied.

“I don’t have time to—*ugh*…” she trailed off.

“This is the top priority. Hurry. We’re going to catch that named player, so focus on this a bit more,” I requested.

“*Ah*, I’ll try! I just need to open a path, right?” she asked.

“Yeah. Do it as soon as possible. You can leave the rest to me,” I replied.

“Got it.”

The troops started moving to carve a path, and the battlefield started changing. Kim Hyun-Sung definitely noticed the path being created because he moved in a direction that perfectly matched the route I just told him.

It was obvious how Kim Hyun-Sung easily caught on to the changes and started moving accordingly.

‘Intuition.’

He wasn’t moving based on decisions or what was in front of him. He was moving based on the intuition that he had honed from spending a lot of time on the battlefield. I wasn’t sure if he was aware, but it was a type of skill a person wouldn’t be able to obtain even after studying military tactics.

“You don’t have to dodge it,” I instructed.

- Affirmative.

It didn’t take long for the seventh detachment to create a path and for Kim Hyun-Sung to start moving using it. I saw him swinging his sword. I told him that he didn’t need to dodge because I thought it would be more advantageous if he minimized useless movements to conserve more stamina. Still, I was curious about how he would interpret my order. If he were even a bit doubtful of me, then there was no way he would have followed my instruction without hesitation.

‘Well, shit! I trust you as well, Hyun-Sung!’

The enemy frowned. The flying spear struck Kim Hyun-Sung, but it shattered with a loud noise. He swung his sword at the enemy, and the enemy cried out in response.

- Aegis!

“*Huh?*”

A large shield manifested on the enemy’s left arm.

‘Shit!’

He quickly created a spear in his right hand and attacked Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘Is he in danger or not?’

I stared at the unknown shield with Mind’s Eye, and I couldn’t help but get worried. The seventh detachment was already heading toward the enemy detachment surrounding Kim Hyun-Sung. However, the enemies made the mistake of not preparing a mage ahead of time.

They definitely thought that they were enough to deal with Kim Hyun-Sung.

Park Deok-Gu finally couldn’t maintain his unique attribute, Noble Sacrifice, after taking damage from the spear for the third time. Many thoughts appeared in my mind at the sight, but I couldn’t find a way to help Kim Hyun-Sung dodge the incoming attack.

“Do…”

Our lovely regressor turned blurry before I could tell him to dodge. He inexplicably blinked behind the enemy and quickly swung his sword. The spear-throwing man was stupefied. Kim Hyun-Sung was definitely in front of him just now, but the former blinked behind the latter in the proverbial blink of an eye, so I could understand the spear-throwing man’s shock.

The shield he was holding up quickly went flying, along with the arms of the enemy soldiers around him. There was no way an ordinary person would have seen what just happened.

If it weren’t for my attribute, then there was no way I would have understood what happened just now.

The man hurriedly activated an artifact in response, but Kim Hyun-Sung was already in the midst of them all. Kim Hyun-Sung quickly severed one of the man’s arms before the latter could even react.

- *Ahhh!*

- Stop him! S-Stop him!

- *Cough!*

“*Wow…*”

I found it ridiculous that I actually got worried about him.

‘I-I can’t figure out his limits… ’

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1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 399
IF HE WERE AN ENEMY (1)

“I don’t know how to say this. This is my first time seeing him go all out, but how… how could a human being be so strong?” asked Lee Ji-Hye with her mouth agape.

I was sure she was having a hard time comprehending what she was seeing as she quietly stared at the screen. Naturally, the people on the chaotic battlefield definitely felt the same as her. Actually, they had to be more shocked than her because we were watching Kim Hyun-Sung through a screen.

‘Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung. Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung.’

There was a chance that Lee Ji-Hye coined the term as a joke, but there was definitely some merit to it when we saw the destruction Kim Hyun-Sung had left in his wake. Kim Hyun-Sung had laid waste to the enemy, but he didn’t kill the majority of the enemy troops. He incapacitated most of them rather than killing them, which was a bit shocking. After all, it was harder to ensure the survival of one’s enemies rather than just outright killing them amidst the chaos of the battlefield.

I felt the same as Lee Ji-Hye. I knew Kim Hyun-Sung was strong, but it was a bit difficult to accept that he could influence a battlefield this much. I knew named players could potentially turn the tables around, but Kim Hyun-Sung was showing us something different compared to what the other named players had done so far. Of course, many things were happening at once, but he seemed like he would become a different person whenever he was diligently fulfilling the orders I gave him. Goosebumps broke out all over me when I saw him wielding his sword, and it was because of the sheer sense of awe I felt while staring at him.

Kim Hyun-Sung was the perfect example of an exemplary warrior in novels.

‘Alright, Hyun-Sung. You’re the best.’

Lee Ji-Hye was definitely more shocked than me because this was her first time seeing Kim Hyun-Sung's true abilities, unlike me, who had been watching him perform up close. It was funny to see her stare at the screen with her mouth agape,

and I started wondering how often she had that kind of expression while giving orders to the detachments under her.

"Amazing, right? Did you see how he swung his sword just now? And how he took down that mage before that?" I asked.

"Yeah, and I don't think 'amazing' is the right word to describe him. I thought all the named players I had seen so far were monsters, but he's an incomprehensible monster. I thought he was special when we first met, but… I really can't wrap my head around it. I'm even starting to question if he's really human, so I don't think *amazing* cuts it. Is Mr. Hyun-Sung really human?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"What do you think he is then if he isn't human?" I asked.

"Who knows? I just know that he's special. Now that I think about it, he had always been special, even in the tutorial dungeon. How can a human being—no, I'm sure my current feelings are different from the past, but he did seem *strange* back then," she replied.

"*Pffft*, really?"

"Of course, I know that you influenced him in the recent plan, but you have the same expression as me, although you aren't as surprised as me. It's undeniable that he's someone people will find hard to understand. The world is really unfair. I think I can finally understand why you have been clinging to him. I'm not… dreaming right now, right?" she asked.

"You're not dreaming. Honestly, I had no idea he was this strong. I had an idea, though. But now, you understand our guild members' reaction, right?" I asked.

"It's not just your guild, but the soldiers around him helped me understand the surrealness of the situation. I'm sure that if he decides to kill someone, then no one will be able to stop him. No one," she replied.

"That's true, but don't think too much about it, noona. People like him are different from people like us. By the way, the sitrep?" I asked.

"Everything is fine, and I gave the job to another commander. They're no longer in trouble, and since we have captured the enemy's named player here, we finally have some room to breathe. Of course, we can't let our guard down just yet, but right now,

we have to end this battle as fast and safely as possible. We can then organize the troops once more and head to Castle Rock. The demon summoner definitely wants us to waste our time here," she answered.

I nodded in agreement at her answer. The winner was basically determined, but a cornered rat would bite the cat. The situation looked optimistic on our side, but we couldn't let our guard down. I was sure that Castle Rock was still embroiled in battle. If the enemy's goal was to make us waste our time, then Jin Cheong could be considered to have succeeded halfway when it came to that goal.

'I thought we could finish this faster… '

"It's still slow."

Once the battle ended, we would have to check the condition of our soldiers, along with many other things. As such, I wouldn't really consider it a win. Yes, we would inflict a lot of damage on our enemies, but it would be the same for us as well. If someone asked me if we would be able to fight right away, then I would shake my head in response. It was a relief that Kim Hyun-Sung was with us, and if it weren't for our lovely regressor's hard work, the situation would have gotten a lot worse.

Anyway, we currently had two choices. We could either force the troops and lead them to Castle Rock, or we could make sure that we recover enough before going to Castle Rock so that we would be in the perfect condition to fight, even if it meant spending more time here.

'The answer is obvious… '

However, I had no choice but to think about it.

I looked over at Lee Ji-Hye and saw her lost in her thoughts. She had to be thinking of the same thing because she was tapping the desk and her thigh. Still, I knew she already knew the wisest choice.

"Retreat, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I ordered.

'I have no choice.'

- The battle isn't over yet. Is it okay for me to retreat just like this?

“I think it’s best if you retreat for now because the war won’t end just with this one battle,” I answered.

- Affirmative. I’ll return with the captured enemy.

“Okay.”

It wasn’t a bad idea for us to hurry up and reinforce Castle Rock, but we had to be prepared for the unknown, so it was the wisest choice for us to keep on doing what we had been doing all this while. It was important for us to make sure that our named player wouldn’t collapse because we would immediately fall into a disadvantage if our regressor collapsed in the middle of battle.

I started talking while Lee Ji-Hye started giving orders while looking at the goddess’ mirrors. However, there was a tinge of worry on her face.

‘What’s wrong with her?’

“Noona, is something wrong?” I asked.

“No, I’m just thinking about something,” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

“It’s okay for us to do this, right?” I questioned.

“Yes. You’re worried about the condition of the soldiers. I’m worried as well, but we have no choice. It looks like Castle Rock is still standing, and even though I know they’re in danger, I’m hoping they’ll hold out a bit longer. If we go in at the wrong time, it could affect us negatively, and the war could end right there and then. I’m sure the enemy wants that to happen,” she replied.

“If Castle Rock ends up in Jin Cheong’s hands…” I paused.

“The situation will become complicated again. At that point, we’ll have to ignore Continental Law and foreign affairs, then release biochemical weapons or something. Otherwise, the damage will be too much for us to bear,” she explained.

Lee Ji-Hye was right. We could end up in a situation that couldn’t just be described as complicated. It wouldn’t end with us just losing a base. To be honest, this fight would inflict irreparable damage to the losing side because both sides had invested heavily into ending this war. The Sacred Democratic Country invested so many soldiers and

supplies that it was basically impossible to quantify, and the Republic had done the same. As such, it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that the next battle would end the bar, but even if the war continued, our side would have the advantage.

The current situation was like that…

The demon summoner summoned all their soldiers at the Eastern Front to gather at Castle Rock. The Sacred Democratic Country lacked soldiers, and I was sure Jin Cheong was aware of that. It was the reason he was focusing on Castle Rock. Of course, they also had to conquer Castle Rock if they want to take the upper hand.

I looked at the goddess' mirror and saw Kim Hyun-Sung helping here and there on the battlefield. I could also see allied soldiers arguing with the enemy soldiers. I knew he was having a difficult time returning because he was helping the allied soldiers while he was on his way here.

'Yeah, yeah. Just don't overdo it, Hyun-Sung. You need to rest.'

Meanwhile, the enemy soldiers kept on attacking our allied soldiers. The soldiers of the enemy were definitely loyal soldiers because they did their best to struggle for as long as they could, which was starting to get on my nerves.

"Should I just get rid of them all…?" I mumbled.

I couldn't help but feel anxious when I saw their determination. This basically meant that they were prepared to go to any lengths just to capture Castle Rock.

'Should I send Dialugia there first?'

Or…

'Should we make a path right now?'

It was risky to send soldiers into battle when they were unprepared, but we were in an urgent situation, so I had to make a gamble. No matter how much I thought about it, we had to make a decision sooner rather than later.

I turned and saw Lee Ji-Hye still tapping on the table. Her grim look made her seem like she was carrying the worries of the entire world on her shoulders. This was the third time. It was rare for her to think about other things while working, so this was

strange.

In addition, she looked too grim to be considered a part of the victorious side, so the sight of that made me nervous as well.

'Shit. Did something happen?'

Perhaps she discovered something I had overlooked.

"Noona, what's wrong?" I asked.

"*Huh*?"

"Is something wrong?" I asked again.

"No, it's nothing like that. The situation isn't bad. I was just thinking," she answered.

"About what?" I asked.

"Things other people think about," she replied.

"…"

"For example…" she paused.

"For example?" I asked.

"What would I do if I were the enemy? Things like that," she continued.

At that, I looked straight at Lee Ji-Hye. The petite woman also stared at me, unblinking.

"What do you think it'll be like? If Kim Hyun-Sung were our enemy? Do you think we'll be able to handle it?" she asked.

'She's… '

She looked too serious for her to be joking.

CHAPTER 400
IF HE WERE AN ENEMY (2)

"What do you think it'll be like? If Kim Hyun-Sung were our enemy? Do you think we'll be able to handle it?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

She looked like she had been thinking about it for quite a while now, and I somehow understood why. The sight she had seen just now was just *that* shocking to her. I took a closer look at her and saw that she was nervous. Her eyes were quivering, and she looked pale as well, which was a great contrast to her usual demeanor.

'She's worried… '

She was probably imagining a situation where Kim Hyun-Sung was our enemy. It was only natural for anyone to think that way if they saw the same scene Lee Ji-Hye had seen.

In fact, I had the same thought as well. Kim Hyun-Sung was too strong and extraordinary that even the higher-ups would think the same. Kim Hyun-Sung had basically become an example of the heights a human being could reach. I was with the light, so I wasn't worried, but I could understand why other people would become wary of him.

Lee Ji-Hye had always been the type to overthink and worry about useless things, so it wasn't strange for her to imagine a scenario where Kim Hyun-Sung was our enemy.

"Do you think we'll be able to handle it?" Lee Ji-Hye asked again.

"Who knows?" I replied.

"…"

"…"

"You don't have to look at me like I'm such a weirdo. I just asked a question anyone else would ask because I honestly never thought he was this strong. I got anxious

just imagining him as our enemy. To be honest, I'm not confident about dealing with him. If he were an enemy, then I would just say GG. You're here with me—yes, but I'm still not confident if we stand a chance against him because our cards are basically useless against him. It's impossible to defeat him without a thorough plan," explained Lee Ji-Hye.

I thought the same. Honestly, there was no way I would be able to dodge a dagger suddenly flying toward me.

"We live in a world where today's friends can be tomorrow's enemies. I'm sure it won't happen, but if Hyun-Sung oppa tries to push you away, then you won't be able to do anything about it. I know he's a kind and naive person, and he's not the type to do something stupid as well. I realized it when I saw him after the tutorial dungeon. I understand why you trust Hyun-Sung oppa, but greed can change a person, so you two could split up in the future," she continued.

"I'm not sure about us splitting up, but is this really the time to say something like that?" I asked.

"I'm telling you this because of our current situation. I'm just suggesting that we prepare while we still can because it'll be too late if we do it later. I'm sorry for saying useless things, but that thought suddenly came into my mind. I'm just really nervous. I finally understand the cliche of people trying to purge the warriors who had completed their adventure. A sharp sword is dangerous, you know," she replied.

"That won't happen," I told her.

"Can you guarantee it? You easily get suspicious of people, after all," she asked.

"…"

"By the way, I'm not saying this for my own benefit. I'm genuinely worried. I'm definitely not trying to get rid of my man's rival so that he can get first place. It's true that I'm kind of greedy, but I'm definitely not a psychopath. I just want to get a clear answer. I just want to know if we will be able to handle him on the off chance that he becomes an enemy. I also want to know if there's a way to control him," she added.

At that, I started thinking…

'Not for my own benefit, my ass!'

Lee Ji-Hye's nature was Selfish and Ambitious, so I didn't believe her at all when she said that she said those words out of pure concern. I was sure she disliked the fact that someone was strong enough to keep me in check. This war would eventually end, and peace would eventually return to the continent.

I had no idea if we would still have something to do by then, but Lee Ji-Hye had no idea that Kim Hyun-Sung was a regressor, so she was definitely thinking about something like this 'the war is basically over, all that remains is splitting the spoils.'

In that sense, Kim Hyun-Sung was in a strange position. After all, he was just the Guild Master of the Blue Guild up until now. Everyone had been looking at him as if he were just an ordinary guild master rather than an extremely powerful individual. But after his recent performance, everyone would start looking at him in a different light.

I could still remember the saying 'with great power comes great responsibility,' but I didn't completely agree with it. I believe that 'with great power comes even greater power' was a better saying, and if the saying was true, then Kim Hyun-Sung's power would bring him even more power. Even if it wouldn't be in the confines of the Sacred Democratic Country, he would likely receive a suitable position elsewhere. After all, he was the Guild Master of the Blue Guild, which was also the guild to which Honorary Cardinal Lee Ki-Young belonged.

This was why Lee Ji-Hye was worried. She wasn't happy that Kim Hyun-Sung—who was already powerful beyond our control—was bound to become even stronger. With her personality, it would be strange for her to just stand idly by and watch as a person who could possibly backstab us grew even stronger.

I could understand why she was worried because I had thought about it many times as well, but I just couldn't imagine Kim Hyun-Sung swinging his sword to end me. He could mistake me for the masked scum in his past life, but I had insurance for that. I was confident about getting out of that predicament if it ever happened.

'Things could work out once the war ends… '

It also didn't make sense that Kim Hyun-Sung would abandon me for his own greed, and based on the Kim Hyun-Sung I had seen so far, he was definitely not like that. Of course, one would never know when a person would change, but…

'He will never do that.'

I organized my thoughts and started talking. "We won't split up."

"You sure?" she asked, looking at me with doubt.

"Yeah. We won't split up, so don't worry, and noona…" I paused.

"Yeah?"

"You know being too greedy isn't good, right?" I asked.

"I-I didn't say anything, and I know that. Based on your actions so far, I know better than anyone," she stammered.

"As you said, it's true that I'm ambitious, but I know my place and limits very well, and even if Kim Hyun-Sung started hating me, I don't plan on doing the same. Think of it like this. If someone like him is on our side, what could the enemy do to us?" I asked.

"*Hm*…"

"If someone like him is on our side… I guarantee that there will be people who would start trembling in fear with just a wave of my finger. Basically, I'm the owner of a switch that would unleash a nuke whenever I want," I continued.

"Can you guarantee that? There's no guarantee that he's thinking the same way, and I'm not being greedy here. I'm just saying that we shouldn't let others take away what is ours," she said.

"Ji-Hye noona," I called out.

"Yes?"

"Do I look like someone who would let others take what's mine?" I asked.

"…"

"Do I?" I asked.

“No.”

“Our conversation ends here, then. There isn’t any issue, and don’t make comments like that from now on. It doesn’t matter whether it’s in front of me or others. Don’t argue about it, either. If something like that happens, then I’ll take care of it. You know better than I do that there’s no need to create more conflict, considering our current situation. Just thinking about the demon summoner is giving me a headache,” I warned her.

“Alright, so stop looking at me like that. I just said it because I was worried. If you say it won’t be a problem, then I believe you,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“If you have time to think about useless things, end this battle and organize the troops who will reinforce Castle Rock, noona,” I told her.

“Yeah, yeah. I got it,” she said.

Our conversation ended. Lee Ji-Hye nodded quietly, but the way she pouted made me think that she wasn’t satisfied with our conversation. She could understand it, but it wasn’t to her satisfaction. I was worried that she would do something behind my back, but she wasn’t dumb enough to do things I didn’t tell her to do.

“Don’t do anything stupid, noona,” I warned her.

“I got it already, so stop it. I won’t do anything, but don’t regret it if you get backstabbed later on,” she said.

That was when we heard knocking on the door…

“Speak of the devil,” Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

The visitor was easy to deduce. Lee Ji-Hye ran to the door and opened it slowly, and I saw Kim Hyun-Sung waiting outside quietly.

“*Ah!* Hyun-Sung oppa!” she greeted.

“I’m sorry for coming here all of a sudden,” Kim Hyun-Sung apologized.

“It’s fine. You did a really good job. You were amazing,” she said.

It was kind of scary how her expression instantly changed. She was even smiling brightly.

'What a fox… '

Lee Ji-Hye's attitude changed so fast that I couldn't believe she was the same person who had just warned me about dealing with Kim Hyun-Sung if he ever became an enemy. If I had to pick a person who was faster at changing attitudes than me, I would definitely pick her.

"I'm sure you're busy…" Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Not at all. The battle is about to end anyway, but what brings you here…" she asked.

"I didn't really have a reason to come… I was just curious about what the situation is like right now," he answered.

"*Ah*, okay. Have a seat. Would you like some tea?" she offered.

"No, I'm okay, Miss Ji-Hye," he replied.

I noticed Kim Hyun-Sung glancing at me as he entered the room while talking to Lee Ji-Hye. He seemed like he was curious about the command room. I had no idea why, but he seemed kind of excited. He was like a child visiting an amusement park. It was especially amusing when he glanced at where I was sitting.

"So this is the place," Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

"Good job, Mr. Hyun-Sung," I said.

"It's nothing. You were more amazing than me. Were you controlling things with these?" he asked.

"I wouldn't say 'control'. All I did was analyze the information and deliver it—"

"You don't need to be so modest, Mr. Ki-Young. Your nose even started bleeding. It was the first time I saw his nose bleed, but his hands and eyes never stopped moving. He was staring at the magic hologram the entire time. You should have seen it, Hyun-Sung oppa…" Lee Ji-Hye interrupted.

"*Ah…*"

I was surprised how Lee Ji-Hye started talking about my performance as if she thought that this was her chance to give me clout. I was kind of embarrassed, but it was a nice assistance because Kim Hyun-Sung suddenly looked at me worriedly.

"I see. Are you okay?" he asked.

"Yes, I'm fine. I overdid it a little bit, but I don't think there's anything wrong with me. Miss Ji-Hye helped me… a lot as well," I answered.

"That's a relief…" he mumbled.

"But you made all the decisions, Mr. Ki-Young. All I did was support you by doing trivial tasks. By the way, what are you holding in your hand?" she asked Kim Hyun-Sung.

"*Ah*, I almost forgot. I came here to deliver this," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

I looked at Lee Ji-Hye, signaling her to look at it, and she nodded slightly in response. Kim Hyun-Sung was holding a *very* small shield. It was the Legendary shield of the enemy's named player.

'Don't worry, Ji-Hye. What you said definitely won't happen.'

I started smiling upon seeing it.

'I have never doubted you, Hyun-Sung.'

CHAPTER 401
IF HE WERE AN ENEMY (3)

[Incomplete Aegis' Shield - Legendary Rank]

[The shield the god of the sky gave to the goddess of war. The shield is incomplete and fragmented. Perhaps it is because of the mana contained in the shield, but the shield is still functioning despite being just a fragment of a complete shield. Greatly increases basic magic resistance. Consume mana to summon the Incomplete Aegis' Shield for a short time. The Incomplete Aegis' Shield will always block critical attacks.]

'Wow, it's such a high-quality item.'

I saw it through the goddess' mirror, but calling it a high-quality item wouldn't be enough to describe it. The fact that it would always block critical attacks was a testament to its value. This kind of item was more useful to tanks, but the fact that he was giving it to me showed how much he was thinking about me.

"*Ah*… this is…"

"I got it for you," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"No, it's fine, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I don't need it," I told him.

"No, I think it's best if you take it. I thought about it many times, but I think this is an item you should have, Mr. Ki-Young. There's no guarantee that the incident that happened earlier won't happen again." He pointed out.

"The incident earlier…"

I could still clearly remember how I almost ended up dying from a spear after walking outside to take a closer look at the situation. I was already starting to forget the incident, but I had never imagined that he would be this thoughtful.

'Look at that, Ji-Hye! This is our Hyun-Sung. How dare you talk about Hyun-Sung backstabbing me?!'

"It's not an item I need, and I don't really block attacks when I fight… I think it's best if you carry it around as insurance, Mr. Ki-Young. I did think about assigning you a bodyguard, but… if you accept this, I'll feel more relieved," he continued.

"But, still—"

"You have to accept it," he insisted.

"If… if you say so. Thank you," I said.

I wanted to accept it right away, but as a Korean, I had to reject it a few times. Even if I rejected it, Kim Hyun-Sung would still attach the tiny, miniature-looking shield to my left wrist anyway. When I *forcefully* accepted the shield and equipped it, I heard a *click* and felt a comfortable grip around my arm. It didn't fit me, but it felt good to have another way to protect myself. In addition, it wasn't a large shield, so I could still comfortably move around.

'Shit. Have I gotten stronger? I feel like I've gotten stronger!'

The Incomplete Aegis' Shield didn't have any base attack power, but it would still hurt. I couldn't help but think that I could probably take on a few close-range players with this shield, but of course, it was just a pipe dream. Since the previous owner of this shield still ended up being defeated, it became clear to me that items weren't everything.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung with eyes full of gratitude. He nodded at me, and the way he did that made it clear that he had infinite trust in me.

"However…" Kim Hyun-Sung started.

"*Huh?*"

"Please keep it a secret from Mr. Deok-Gu…" he requested.

"*Ah*…"

"I personally thought it would be more useful for you than for Mr. Deok-Gu. It was my

personal judgment, so I'm worried that it'll make Mr. Deok-Gu sad," he explained.

"*Haha*, I understand. I won't tell Deok-Gu," I laughed.

"And the other guild members…" he added.

"I won't tell the other members as well," I said.

'Why is he so cute?'

The worried Kim Hyun-Sung was so adorable that I had this urge to bite him.

I looked at Lee Ji-Hye again to see her reaction, but the way she stared at me suspiciously made me feel under pressure. Her suspicion about Kim Hyun-Sung seemed to have been relieved somewhat, but it felt like she was being suspicious about something else entirely. Moreover, she seemed worried as well.

"I think it's best if Mr. Hyun-Sung rests for a bit because the next fight will be even longer. Fortunately, the enemy soldiers are starting to retreat," I suggested.

"Does that mean we managed to weaken them?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"They have to prepare for the next fight as well," I replied.

"There's… something I need to tell you about that," he said cautiously.

"What?"

"I've told you this before, but… a part of me still feels uncomfortable…" he started.

"*Ah*… go on," I said.

'Here he goes again.'

It seemed like he had gotten PTSD from getting backstabbed so many times. Of course, it wasn't as bad as the first time, but since the upcoming fight could be the final fight that would end the war, I was sure he was starting to think about many things.

"I can't get rid of the feeling that this is all a trap. It feels too easy…" he said.

“A trap?” I asked.

“Yes.”

This was the first time Lee Ji-Hye saw Kim Hyun-Sung’s PTSD from getting backstabbed too many times, so her confusion was understandable. It was natural for her to be surprised because he suddenly started a serious conversation about how he couldn’t get rid of the feeling that all this could be a trap. Lee Ji-Hye looked at me as if she was asking what this guy was talking about, and she was definitely having a hard time accepting Kim Hyun-Sung’s sudden remark about traps. She listened to him and either nodded away or pretended like she was surprised. However, the highlight of the entire conversation was the look on her face, which seemed like it was telling me to get this weird man away from her.

“We have to be careful,” he said.

Kim Hyun-Sung pleaded. We could just laugh it off, but I couldn’t do that because of Lee Ji-Hye’s words earlier.

‘The demon summoner is definitely doing a good job… ’

The problem was that Jin Cheong wasn’t showing sides of himself that would remind Kim Hyun-Sung of the masked scum. Jin Cheong had to appear crueler and more meticulous. Using standard tactics was enough to lay waste, but it wasn’t enough to convince Kim Hyun-Sung that he was the masked scum. The masked scum in Kim Hyun-Sung’s memory was basically the incarnation of the devil, and it wasn’t an exaggeration to say that he was the king of scums. He was the scummiest person who had done all kinds of disgusting and perverted things.

‘This is gonna be a lot of work… ’

Now that I thought about it, the situation felt really dangerous. The fact that the three of us were in this small room suddenly started to bother me.

‘Thinking about it now, she was a masked scum as well… I hope he hasn’t noticed it.’

We could end up in a situation where Kim Hyun-Sung might mistake Lee Ji-Hye and me as the masked scummy couple in his past life, so I had to take a step backward. I was sure their masks had various spells cast on them, such as a voice-changing spell, but I still wanted to avoid any strange misunderstandings.

“The things that Hyun-Sung oppa mentioned…” Lee Ji-Hye chimed in.

“Yes…”

“To be honest, I can’t say that it’s possible. Obviously, those things are prohibited based on the Continental War Act, and some of them are so cruel that the War Act even forgot to include them because of the extremely low chance of them happening. From my point of view, they’re shocking stories… If someone really were making a trap like that, then I’d call them scum—no, they wouldn’t be human scum. They would be hopeless filth that cannot be recycled,” she explained.

“He’s more than capable of doing that,” he said.

“I’ll think of it from different perspectives, Hyun-Sung oppa. It’s important to take a look at where you’re going to land before you leap,” she said.

Lee Ji-Hye’s comment really hurt my conscience, but I had no choice but to speak cautiously, “Even if he prepared a trap… I’m sure it’ll be difficult for him to use it so openly.”

“What?”

“If we think about the Republic’s current situation, I’m sure the demon summoner Jin Cheong will think that using inhumane tactics won’t be beneficial to him because he’s still rejecting the fact that he’s the one who caused the incident in Laios. I’m sure that doing such inhumane actions will affect his mind as well as the morale of his soldiers. It’ll decrease the Republic’s influence, and most of all, he will have to worry about foreign affairs…” I answered.

“*Hm*… I see.”

“He won’t do something stupid like turning those who haven’t participated in the war yet and are just observing the situation into enemies. I-I didn’t tell you this last time, but I think you can relax regarding that, Mr. Hyun-Sung,” I added.

“But—”

“Please.”

“If we’re so cornered that we can’t think about other situations, then…”

I clenched my fists in joy because it seemed like the conversation would finally end, but Lee Ji-Hye suddenly joined the conversation and said, “Well, it’s definitely possible. I believe the biggest reason this war even happened in the first place was that demon summoner Jin Cheong couldn’t let go of the things he has in his possession. If people like him got cornered, *hm*—do you understand what I’m trying to say? Those who have nothing to lose can become incredibly cruel.”

‘Lee Ji-Hye, you masked bitch!’

I didn’t think that she would pull a Park Deok-Gu and mess things up. It was amusing how Kim Hyun-Sung nodded while clenching his fists. He looked really worried, but there was no guarantee that the demon summoner would do something so inhumane.

‘Should I make preparations?’

I came up with a few things as insurance, but I still had to think if they were even necessary. Unfortunately, I didn’t have a choice because the battle here was still ongoing, and we would soon head over to Castle Rock. Lee Ji-Hye turned her gaze away from Kim Hyun-Sung toward the goddess’ mirrors.

“Don’t chase after those who are retreating. We need to reorganize our troops as fast as possible and head over to Castle Rock. This will be transmitted to every detachment, and the advance party shall move immediately.”

- Affirmative.

“Transmission complete. If there’s an unknown situation or you find anything suspicious, please report it to the command center right away. Please report even the smallest details. Additionally, we’ll form a separate scouting party with the remaining rangers and mages. We will also form a separate task force for unknown situations and variables,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

- Affirmative.

“Please encourage the soldiers. This is the final fight,” she added.

- Understood!

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded at Lee Ji-Hye. He was definitely satisfied with Lee Ji-Hye’s

words. He still looked anxious, but he had definitely gotten the hint by now.

“I’ll stay here and make preparations with the adjutants. You two go out and get some fresh air,” Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

“It’s fine.”

“I’m not telling you to just get fresh air. Everyone is exhausted, and if you two stay with them, I’m sure it’ll lift their spirits up. You should also give them fatigue recovery potions,” she explained.

“Got it.”

“*Ah*, please stop by the area where the female soldiers are gathered. It’ll be very *helpful*,” she added.

‘Why would that be helpful?’

It smelled fishy, but I had no choice but to nod.



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